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**THE**  
**MIDLANDS AND OTHERS.**

**BY**  
**HENRY LYTTLEJOHN.**

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## THE MIDLANDS AND OTHERS.

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### CHAPTER I.

“THEIR graces in the state rooms, I suppose?” said Lady de Crecy’s housekeeper, to whom the mistress of Tinselby was giving her commands a day or two before the arrival of the party.

“Yes: Lady Selina in the blue chintz, and the Seabrights next the chapel.”

“Is Mr. Evans coming, my lady?”

“Certainly: put him in the tower.”

“’Mongst all them fusty old books, my lady! La! I wouldn’t sleep there for anything. I’m

sure the place is haunted; Jane says she hears the groanings every night.”

“The creakings of the weathercock, you silly woman. As for the books, they are just what Mr. Evans likes.”

“And the other gentlemen—Sir Percy Froth and Lord St. Kitts, and Mr. Wharton, where are they to be, mum?”

“Anywhere—in the bachelors’ rooms.”

“And the marquis too, my lady?”

“Well, no: I think you had better give Lord Northern the South Tapestry. Are the new sofa and arm-chair come? Oh, and now I remember it, have the folding-screen moved there from my sitting-room; and bid the carpenter take the ‘Shepherdess’ down and hang the ‘Raphael’ from my boudoir in its place. I’m afraid the room wants a deal of altering to make it comfortable, Spicer.”

“Do you think so, my lady? why, it’s the beautifullest bedroom in the house. There’s nothing splendider at Tramways I’m sure; and as to the pictures, the ‘Shepherdess’ is worth any Raphael, least-ways to my thinking whatsumever, and I expect his lordship will agree with me.”

“Never mind what he may think, but do as I direct you. And have the fire lighted in the room at once, and keep an eye to it yourself, Spicer.”

“Let me alone for that, my lady, I’ll take care the marquis shall be comfortable. He was always a pet of mine ever since he was in frocks, bless him! I never saw the like of him for dried apricots and damson cheese, when he come home from school that was, and Miss Helen Seabright and him used to romp about together. To think they should be growed up! Ah, well! They do say Miss Seabright is to be the marchioness before



long, has your ladyship heard tell of it? Indeed! Well I hope so too, my lady, they'll make a handsome couple, wont they? Though it's a splendid match for her, which everyone must think so."

The housekeeper rattled on with the privilege of an old domestic. Perhaps her mistress had no objection to the theme: perhaps (our servants know so much) the housekeeper was aware of this.

The latter being dismissed, Lady de Crecy not long after was standing, like a statue, in her boudoir, facing the picture which she had ordered to be brought there. It was a portrait of herself in costume. The resemblance between the original and the effigy was still striking. Still, we say, because the portrait had been taken five years ago, two years *i.e.* before her marriage. And though the likeness was unmistakable, a change was also manifest. From the canvas beamed the brilliant

and sparkling face of a girl of eighteen, piquante and saucy with conscious beauty. The lady who gazed upon it was no less beautiful, but her beauty was of a different order. The five years' interval had mellowed all her charms. The figure was fuller, the complexion richer, though less translucent, and (this the greatest change) the expression was now grave, and even melancholy.

Lady de Crecy fixed her eyes upon the picture until they overflowed with tears. Her musings shaped themselves into something like the following. "Five years ago that happy girl was dressed for her first court ball; her partner for the evening, the man whom she believed would be her partner for life. Well might she wear that happy look! Yet not if she had read the future: that was not to be what she expected; instead of it, sorrow and disappointment, no hope'

and endless trial. Whose has been the fault? Was it mine, or was it his? Why did I not marry that evening's partner? why did I marry Lord de Crecy? The choice was all my own. I obeyed my conscience; and *this* is my reward! But was it conscience, and no other motive that I acted on? Dreadful question, I dare not answer honestly. If such a thought were once admitted, regret would grow insufferable. No, I acted upon principle; my judgment was biassed by no unworthy motive; I wished only to do what was right. Alas! how woefully I erred. The husband I chose is not the saint I took him for: the husband I rejected might not have been the sinner. They lied to me: they deceived me: and who so shamefully as Lord de Crecy! \* \* How pretty that girl's face is: no wonder they make a fuss about her. Could I have ever been like that? so fresh, so lovely as that

shepherd girl? How I must have altered—and yet—*he* does not think so. The world tells me I am handsome still. This glass says so too. Fool! is that what you are smiling at? What to me is beauty now? What to me is admiration? Am I young? Am I beautiful? Have I more talent, better taste than other women? What are they worth to me? I may not be loved. I may never love. Beauty, talent, every gift of nature, must be an instrument of torment to me. Wealth to tantalize, but to be enjoyed by none. Next to the bliss of enriching one craving heart with all this superfluity, would be the peace of death's disfigurement. Were I ugly, had I no attractions, did I not tempt others to tempt me, how pure and calm might be life. And now, poor wretch! to think how much I have to give but mocks me with my bitter poverty. \* \* The picture is

better here. It would not comfort me to aggravate his trouble. He need not be reminded of the past. Perhaps he is beginning to forget it. He promised he would try, and, after this long interval, to propose this visit looks as though he had gained the strength he sought for. Pray Heaven it may be so! These rumours too about his marriage with Helen Seabright, are they true I wonder? To-morrow I shall know—in a moment I shall know: his manner to me in her presence—to her in mine. Fancy his marrying *that* girl! of all women the least suited to him. So flighty—so fast! She never could appreciate him, nor he content himself with her. \* \* Happiness! In real life there is none.”

The following day the party came. The De Crecys had invited the Midlands and their company. St. Kitts, the Lanyards, Froth, and Whar-

ton, were all friends of the De Crecys. The two great houses were so closely allied by intermarriage and juxtaposition, that most of their acquaintances were common. For the shooting season it often happened that the party at both places was nearly the same. On this occasion there were only one or two additions to the guests we met at Tramways; amongst them was a Mr. Evans, a single gentleman of fortune, and a special favourite of Lady de Crecy; a Mrs. Finch, a widow, and one or two county neighbours.

One evening soon after her arrival, the Duchess of Midland, whose ideas at present were limited to one subject, took an opportunity to broach this to her hostess.

“How charmingly pink suits her,” whispered her grace, fondly glancing at Miss Helen; this young lady was conversing with her son.

“Yes,” says her friend, ambiguously; “she is so very fair.”

“And so pretty,” adds the duchess.

“She is improved by her London season.”

“She was very much admired.”

“Was she?”

“Immensely! she was asked everywhere. Of course people exaggerate, but she is looked upon as an heiress too; which is always thought a good deal of, you know.” The duchess gave a little nod to signify her superior knowledge of the world.

“Did any one in particular admire her?” asks Lady de Crecy, with a languid manner and a quickened pulse.

“Oh yes, a good many young men were smitten with her. I heard of several.”

“No *one* more than the rest I suppose?”

“Indeed there was,” replied her grace; “the young gentleman talking to the duke, for instance.”

“Lord St. Kitts?”

“Yes, and another also in this room,” glancing at Sir Percy, “and Selina says that Captain Mar-rum—Lord Sands’ son—made her an offer. But between ourselves,” the duchess spoke behind her fan, “I think Nelly has lost her heart elsewhere.”

“To Mr. Wharton, you mean? I suspected that this long time,” says the other.

“No, dear, not to Wharton, to—but do you really think, my love, that Mr. Wharton is the man? I have often thought so too, do you know; but Selina is so very confident she is *éprise* with Northern!”

Lady de Crecy smiled at her friend’s ingenuousness. “Well, duchess,” she said, “you have had more opportunities of judging than I have. I



own I looked upon it as a thing to be. The gentleman was to have been here to-day; but I have just received a note from him excusing himself, somewhat abruptly, on the score of urgent business abroad. Perhaps Helen knows about it, she seems rather out of sorts—not so brisk and full of spirits as usual.”

“Poor thing!” sighed the elderly lady. “I do wish Northern and she—I mean—it would do *so* well—don’t you think?”

“You dear old woman,” thought Lady de Crecy; “even to me you can’t help being honest.” “Admirably!” this fair hypocrite replied.

“I am so glad you think so, Daisy dear,” and the duchess gave her neighbour’s hand a confidential little squeeze, and accompanied it with a look of warm affection.

Was there ever such a simple creature as this

duchess? At that moment she was as certain as could be that Selina's stories about dear Northern and dear Daisy were absolutely groundless. She was perfectly convinced that dear Daisy's interest in dear Northern was as unselfish and as pure as that of his fond mother. And yet a single moment of reflection must have shattered these convictions to pieces. How could her grace mistake the signs of which she had so often been an accidental witness? Did she not observe with a woman's eye how little notice Northern took of Helen Seabright? His whole attention was absorbed in the lady of the house. She saw how gloomy and abstracted he would be when that lady was away; and how sometimes both of them appeared unhappy. Why, she had once come suddenly upon them, and found her son holding Viscountess de Crecy's hand. The latter's eyes were so red

and swollen they almost brought the tears into her own. Could the duchess be mistaken? Even Lord de Crecy's manner was enough to banish all illusions. Daisy's husband made no attempt apparently to hide his jealous rage. To his wife he was sometimes peevish and insolent before everyone; and to Lord Northern, distant, rude, and shy. The duchess could not blind herself to such symptoms; and when her thoughts were directed to them the poor old lady was in despair. It was the weakness of her character to sympathize with everyone. She was heartily sorry for Lord de Crecy, and looked upon him as an object of true pity. Naturally, she was unhappy for her son; and as she loved Daisy she compassionated her too. So far there was no harm done: but what, alas! she must be blamed for, is—she could not for the life of her help wishing—yet why should I calum-

niate thee, dear honest soul! long since hast thou accounted for this and all thy little trespasses. And if there were none more weighty than thy secret wishes for the joy of others, may he be whipped who'd ever dream of blaming thee!

And now, what need to tell the reader how sadly these young people were entangled? Are not Lady Selina's schemes intelligible? Are they not most praiseworthy? Let Mr. Wharton console himself. Let Mombrun and Miss Lavinia rejoice. Miss Helen has no more chance of being a duchess than you or I have. I tell you this young marquis is just as furious as he ever was. Neither America nor absence have done him one jot of good. This visit to Tinselby is ruining him completely: and talking of ruin, what will happen to Daisy? Poor Daisy! we shall presently have occasion to relate how she happens to be in this

unlucky plight ; at present we must guard her from those suspicions which our mismanagement or the reader's purity might otherwise give birth to. Yes, madam, I am happy to inform you that up to this point, Daisy is as pure as even you could wish her. Earnestly and resolutely has she struggled against the dread disease which gnaws her suffering heart : solemnly has she sworn that no temptation shall subdue her : and bravely, as yet, has she kept her vow. Hers is not the sort of character that courts self-chastisement as a luxury ; and hugs a disappointment with the secret satisfaction which feebler natures find in sorrow. Had it been so, she might ere this have fallen perhaps. The meek acceptance of a "trial" is sometimes nothing but the choosing of one. "The Lord's will be done" too often imputes to Providence the natural sequences of our culpability. With Daisy

self-esteem and force of will had been her two main props. These qualities had begotten habits of virtuous action in her; and thanks to associations' law, this mighty force of Habit is as powerful for good as for evil. Let no one think to stifle conscience by that soothing plea—Necessity. We are as much the creatures of good circumstances as we are of bad. The fact that evil thoughts or deeds are harder to resist when once indulged in, also proves resistance easier at every repetition. And the prayers that most avail, are actual efforts towards the end that's prayed for.

This at least was Daisy's doctrine. She prayed, you may rely upon it; but her prayers were struggles against evil, and her character was strengthened by this exercise of volition. But still it was no easy matter to sustain the victory. There were two weak points from which she was

assailable. Her resentment against her husband, and her compassion for her lover. Lord de Crecy's conduct towards her, as often as not, assumed the guilt which she so valiantly resisted. His jealousy knew no limits; and this insult was outrageous in proportion to her honesty. On the other hand was Northern, with weapons in his armoury which few of Daisy's sex had power to contend against. Of his looks we have said enough: and personal beauty in men is never an ultimate consideration with women; they value it, as they value every other masculine attribute,—as an instrument of power. Power is their Deity. And men who possess it in any shape—beauty of form, physical strength, wealth, moral supremacy, intellect, force of will, and rank, infallibly command their homage. I place these various modes of power in accordance with their degree. Until

the permanent influences of affection rule, Rank stands highest in the scale of potency. Social eminence is the outward sign of every kind of merit; what wonder then if admiration mounts step by step with greatness?

Then, too, Lord Northern's assurance and self-assertion were no less admirable than his title. And here again we must insert our comments. The world takes people summarily at their private valuation; and even when it finds its errors, it winks at the deception which imposed upon it. Now, women hold most of their opinions at second hand; hence he that looks down upon all others is pretty sure to be looked up to by them. Again, his lordship had another advantage, may be a concomitant of the former; he possessed the inestimable "gift of familiarity." To men who are generally ready to pardon faults in those above



them for a word or nod that for the moment levels both up and down, Lord Northern's frankness won him friends; with women the gift went further: it suggested the most delightful of relationships, without shocking their timidity, or compromising their tender scruples.

So much for Northern's character. Seen through Daisy's eyes it probably assumed an aspect which we have failed to give it. To her no feature in that character was more attractive or more dangerous than the misery he suffered on her account. Yet the only kindness she could show him was to persist in being cruel.

"Why did you not answer my last letter?" asks Lord Northern, who takes his mother's place by Daisy's side. Lord de Crecy was glaring at them across the room.

"It did not require an answer," the lady thinks.

“Require! No. It was not a business letter, certainly!”

“I forget what it was about,” says the fibbing Daisy, trying to be off-hand.

The marquis sighed heavily—Lord de Crecy heard him, and his countenance twitched with such a pang that Mrs. Seabright said, “I fear your lordship’s gout is dreadful bad to-night.”

“No,” said he, “’tis the hurt I got at Tramways. I begin to think the mischief is past cure.”

“Yes!” ejaculated Northern. “There was nothing worth remembering, nothing but the old story. You never took an interest in *that*. You might have written me one line though—when you know how precious to me is the very paper which your hand has touched.”

“What good can writing do?” the lady mur-

nurs, nervously turning over a book which she had seized upon.

“What good can silence do?” says he, “unless it is a pleasure to give me pain; which in truth it seems sometimes to be.”

“Hush!” said she, beseechingly.

“Well, is it not so?”

“You know it is not. I have often begged you not to address me in a strain which it is impossible for me to listen to. You pay no heed to my entreaties; what resource have I but silence?”

“And what for me could be half so hard to bear? Write and abuse me if you will, say that you hate me; why don't you write that? Anything is better than your cold disdain, or mute indifference.”

“They are watching us,” muttered the victim, in despair; “pray—pray spare me.”

“What do I care who watches? What is the world to me when you are so hard and cruel?”

“For my sake I entreat you,” she whispered.

“Promise then you will answer when I write to you—say anything—say something: lecture me on my madness. I will try to become sane: but don't drive me to desperation. Will you promise?”

“I will promise nothing. You have no right to persecute me. You must be mad, I think, or you would not dare insult me so.”

“Persecute,—insult you, Daisy! Listen to me——”

“Mr. Evans,” called the lady, with one of her winning smiles; “have you seen this new album of Lady Selina's? it is full of such pretty things. Here—there is plenty of room by my side.”

Mr. Evans chuckled in his sleeve, and sat down.

## CHAPTER II.

WHEN Lord St. Kitts and Sir Percy Froth retired that evening to the smoking-room, these gentlemen indulged themselves pretty freely in commenting on their friends.

“He goes the pace, Percy, don’t he? I’d give a trifle for such brass as that; the metal is so polished too, he patronizes them so splendidly.”

“Yes,” says Froth, puffing lazily at his cigar. “There’s nothing women admire like courage. *L’audace toujours de l’audace*. It saves ’em so much trouble.”

“How handsome she is : looks dooced unhappy though. Do you think the old boy twigs?”

“He must be a precious flat if he doesn’t. Break that big coal, Kitty, let’s have a blaze.”

“I caught him looking uncommon ugly two or three times to-night, when Northern was on the sofa with her. Do you suppose the *entente cordiale* really exists between them?”

“*Quien sabe!* You’d better ask Northern,” laughs the baronet. “He don’t look so jolly under the circumstances as he ought to. I wonder De Crecy stands it as he does. Why the devil don’t he kick him out of the house?”

“That’s a game two might play at. And the odds are the old-un would come off second best.”

“Metaphorically, I mean.”

“Well, there’s nothing Northern would like better than a row. He’d jump at a chance of breaking De Crecy’s head. The noble viscount knows it too.”

“But why on earth did he ask him here?”

“That was rather stupid of him, I allow. The fact is, De Crecy is a vulgar-minded old dog. He is as fond of real swells as mother Seabright is of sham ones. He can’t resist asking the duke and duchess every year; and to have left out Northern, who came down to Tramways unexpectedly just after the invitation to the whole lot of us, would have been to open a display of his frontal ornaments. I dare say he ain’t very proud of ’em.”

“Northern ought to be more civil to him. Property has its duties as well as pleasures; don’t they say? He shouldn’t snub the old chap so: it shows a want of proper feeling.”

“The habit is inveterate. Northern knows him too intimately to respect him. And after all, it is only tit-for-tat. I fancy the marquis doesn’t consider himself bound by any great obligation to Lord de Crecy.”

“That’s true, De Crecy is certainly the wrong man in the right place. Poor Northern! it’s dooced hard to be cut out by an old cuss like that.”

“He did his best to deserve it though.”

“What, carrying on in Paris, you mean? The fellow has such cheek. He will wash his linen in the streets. Why, hang me! if just about the time he was making up to Daisy Lea, he didn’t drive down Piccadilly with Fanny Mountjoy, and left his brougham at the club door for half an hour—her ladyship inside.”

“Pshaw! my dear Kitty, it was most likely Lady Selina. You know you are as blind as a bat.”

“Dash it, man! Didn’t I shake hands with her myself? Never was so astonished. I fancied she was your *chère amie*, old boy.”

“Mine? I like that! I never spoke two syllables to her in my life.”



“What infernal liars some fellows are now! Little Busby told everyone at Spratt’s that he saw you take her into Browser’s—that eating-place in the Strand, don’t you know—not a fortnight ago.”

Sir Percy Froth positively declared there was not a word of truth in the affirmation. And swore in very pointed language that next time he encountered Mr. Busby he would call that mendacious person to account.

“There was a talk,” said Lord St. Kitts, “of Northern going in for the parson’s daughter, wasn’t there?”

“Nelly Seabright? Well, I believe the women wanted to get up a match for propriety’s sake, more than anything else.”

The young earl burst out laughing. “You mean,” said he, “they are anxious for a marriage

to make the other relationship respectable? You have a flattering idea of female ethics, Percy. But, joking apart, you think there's nothing in it?"

"No, I don't believe a word of it. See how mad he is about the viscountess."

"She's a jolly girl though, ain't she?"

"What, Miss Nelly? Ye-as, not bad. Rather slippery, I should say." Sir Percy yawned, as if the subject did not interest him.

"Lots of pewter too," pursued his lordship, tentatively. "Just suit you, Percy: five or six thou. per annum, at least, eh?"

"Me? no, wouldn't take her at double the figure. Besides, I don't suppose she has anything of the kind. Who told you what she'd got?"

"Terrier, first-rate authority. But tell me old chap, did it ever strike you that that big

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engineering party was making up to her? Mr. Wharton, I mean."

"Can't say I have taken much notice of the man. Very probable, though. An adventurer like that's sure to have a shy for the money."

"Egad! she seemed to me rather sweet upon him. Why ain't he here? I know he got an invitation."

"Gone abroad, I believe! a good riddance too—conceited ass! He and old Mumford are always putting their heads together for some mischief or other. I would not trust either of 'em farther than I could throw a bull by the tail."

"Well, I don't think he's a bad sort of fellow. He doesn't cotton up a chap, like lots of men in his position. As to old Lavinia, she's a sly old girl, but she wouldn't do anybody harm, bless you! not she."

In this racy and familiar style these fashionable young gentlemen pursued their conversation far into the night: but as the topics they discussed were, for the most part, unsuitable to refined readers, (for whom exclusively this history is compiled,) let us improve the opportunity by some notice of Lord de Crecy, and of the circumstances which led to his ill-assorted marriage.

Sir Percy Froth has spoken of his lordship in our hearing as a vulgar man. This epithet must be taken with modification. Lord de Crecy, in all that relates to external demeanour, was a model of good breeding. His vulgarity, we are bound to say, was merely mental. In society his lordship had always passed for a man of the most patrician manners and appearance. When young he was remarkably good-looking. And though advanced in his sixth decade, he still preserved

(with the assistance of an accomplished valet) so much of his juvenility that at a little distance, or in a faint light, he might have been taken for a youth of forty. And to judge by Lord de Crecy's own account of his close intimacy with the last of the Georges, he must at one time have led a life which is generally considered deleterious to whatever pertains to youth. It is a well-known fact that he was once a perfect Juan, and that the catalogue of his escapades would astonish a Leporello. This of course was long ago. The noble viscount had adopted a different line. He had for many years enjoyed the odours of sanctity. He was a luminary at Exeter Hall. He figured prominently as a patron of all sorts of moral and religious movements. He had published his "Elucidations of Revelations," and was the anonymous author of the celebrated "Inner Man ;

or, Wrestling in the Closet." As such you may be sure the reminiscences of his former days were not agreeable to him. Nothing did he dislike more than the allusions of his contemporaries to the details of his youthful follies. True, not many of his comrades were remaining ; but of those few the majority, I suspect, had too little regard to his present prejudices. Conceive the horror a man like Lord de Crecy must feel, when such libertines as O'Flaherty (who does not know the drunken old miscreant?) happens to meet him at the club, and scarifies him for the entertainment of the assembly ! The fuller the room, the louder the old reprobate shouts at him. " Ah, De Crecy," you may hear him bawl, " d'ye remember the thrashen ye gave me when I was your fag at Eton, for pouren the boot varnish into thim locks of yours ? Begad ! 'twas a bold

deed for a little chap like me, that was so much younger than yourself. But ye broke every bone in me skin for ut." Or looking out of the bow-window, O'Flaherty would call attention to a passing petticoat. "A neat foot and ankle, I declare! and a pritty smoilin little chit of a face too. Faith! De Crecy, she's not unlike the little wench ye met on the Margate steamboat—not the won ye carried off from the boorden school; but the other sister, ye know, that doid of broken heart in the workhouse after ye deserted her." I don't envy the noble viscount's feelings when I reflect how sensitive he was to the judgments of his fellow-creatures.


Poor Daisy, too! How lamentable was your case when, in those early days of your disillusionment you began to comprehend what a demirep and hypocrite you were wedded to. To be sure,

you never could have loved him, even had your affections been as free as you supposed them : but you might have honoured him, had he proved worthy of your esteem. Once indeed you did look up to him ; believing that in his virtues and paternal care you could repose with confidence ; believing that under his wise guidance you could forget the disappointment by which your first fresh love was cankered. Alas ! how terrible had that blow been. With what horror you heard the repeated rumours of your hero's profligacy ! All the town was talking of it. Such acts as my lord St. Kitts reported to his friend had furnished tattle for a hundred tongues ; and the good and pious Lord de Crecy was foremost to condole with you, and express his horror at the awful sinfulness of the reprobate young man.

Who can estimate the wound such scandal




must inflict upon a pure and spotless mind like Daisy Lea's? You and I, dear madam, who have cut our wisdom teeth, have ceased to be astonished at the wickedness of young men, or even old ones. We are charitable enough, I hope, to set down many sins (especially our own) to the score of amiable weakness: but Daisy Lea was outraged beyond measure at her lover's unfaithfulness and depravity. Deeply she took the matter to heart. It was almost incredible to her virtuous mind that the idol of her worship was itself crawling before shrines too loathsome and profane to think of. We may easily imagine how Lord de Crecy, and those who favoured his designs, made the most of the girl's disgust and of the youth's misdeeds. These were great capital for him—a rival suitor, and he practised the greatest skill in utilizing them.



And must we own that these dreadful rumours were not entirely without foundation? St. Kitts was very truthful; he was too good-natured to invent a tale to injure. What he affirmed was doubtless true. But we protest against the notion that Lord Northern was then in love with Daisy; or seriously contemplated a proposal to her. In those days the marquis' attachment was not of that absorbing nature to preclude the possibility of his yielding to any of the numerous temptations to which his position and his susceptibility exposed him. He certainly preferred Daisy to any one woman in the world; but he was not yet prepared to give up all women for the sake of one. Yet notwithstanding this priority of freedom, had he dreamed that she could dream of marrying any other man, the thought of positively losing her altogether would have set him

instantly to estimate his loss. Instantly this young sultan's passions would have been ablaze; he would have cast off every other tie, have flung every thought of trifling to the winds, and have seized upon his prize with the swoop of a famished eagle. The fact is, the handsome and talented young prince believed steadfastly in his own invincibleness. He knew his power over Daisy's heart; but had yet to learn the force of that heart's purity. He believed that she was only awaiting his royal pleasure to fling herself into his outstretched arms; but he overlooked the haughty spirit and high temper which could spurn a worthless lover, whatever it might cost her. The first intimation of such a temper was the public announcement of the girl's engagement to Lord de Crecy, and like a thunderbolt it struck him down. The old peer's addresses



had long been openly paid ; and Northern had bantered Daisy about her aged suitor as though it were the most absurd of jokes.

He was in Paris at the time the news first reached him ; amusing himself, as fame reported, in the salons of the charming Mademoiselle Callypso, of the Variétés. Within an hour after receiving the intelligence, Lord Northern was on his way to England. Not a moment did he tarry in the gay capital, either for convenience or engagements. The fascinating Callypso was forgotten ; not a note even written to take leave of her. Not a message to put off the promised drive in the "Bois" ; or the morrow's dinner at the "Trois Frères." Foaming with jealous wrath, and maddened by suspense, he flew to London ; and, travel-stained and dishevelled as he reached it, rushed headlong and impetuous to demand an explanation.

Daisy Lea had neither father nor mother. She had lived, since their death, with a married sister. At the house of this lady—Lady Jane—the indignant marquis arrived late the following evening. The door of the coach is flung open with a bang. The bell is rung and rung again—the knocker shakes the house to the very attics. Daisy Lea, and Daisy only, guesses the meaning of the disturbance. Lady Jane's husband is still absent at the "House." The two sisters have just been having tea. The elder was talking over the great event, and pompously discussing that anxious question—the trousseau; the younger, idly and vacantly gazing at the fire, no more thinking of her sister's words than of the diamonds which lay glittering in her lap. Her thoughts had crossed the channel, and were busy with her love, and—Callypso.

“Heavens ! Jane, what’s all that noise, I wonder ?”

“Richard come back from the House, I suppose. How pale you look child. You had better go to bed. You’ve done too much to-day.”

Lady Jane rises to embrace her sister, but the door bursts open, and Lord Northern stands before them. Daisy Lea suppresses a scream. Her head swims, and for a few moments she neither comprehends nor even hears the words addressed to her.

“Lady Daisy,” says Lord Northern, in clear incisive tones, “it is stated in the newspapers that you are going to marry Lord de Crecy. Is there any truth in this ; or is it false ?”

Lady Daisy clenched her teeth, but made him no reply.

“Is it true or false ?” repeats the marquis, in the same distinct and cutting voice.

“It is quite true,” says Lady Jane, taking her sister by the hand in token of the protection she afforded.

“Then God forgive you!” says Northern, “for you have broken my heart,” and whiter than the marble chimney-piece against which he stood, he turned to leave the room.

“Stay,” cried Daisy, starting up.

His lordship paused and answered, “What can you have to tell me more?”

The girl advanced to meet him, and held out her hand. The young man touched it coldly; and like a flower smitten with a wintry blast, it fell to its owner’s side.

“Recall those words,” she said, “they are unkind; and, pray God, untrue.”

“Untrue, untrue! Lady Daisy Lea? There was a time (not long gone by) that you believed

me when I said I loved you—loved you as I never loved other—as I shall never love again.”

At the thought of his own loyalty, the young man covered his face and groaned.

“Northern !” gasped the unhappy girl.

“But no,” he burst forth. “You never did believe me, or you would not have treated me like this. You thought my passionate declarations” (had he ever made any, I wonder ?) “were as cold and void as your own heart. You listened to me with well-feigned interest. You allowed me to pay you attentions, which until now I had always taken to imply a mutual understanding of—of the most sacred nature. I believed in your sincerity ; I believed, and would have staked my life on it, that Daisy Lea was true and guileless as she was pure. Good God ! when I recall what has passed between us for years, I cannot now realize what



you yourself avow. I cannot realize that you are false."

"False!" echoes poor Daisy.

"False!" chimes in the bristling Lady Jane. "My sister is too generous to cast the imputation back upon yourself, Lord Northern. She is too pure-minded indeed to understand to what extent you, my lord, deserve the reproaches which you so shamelessly heap on her. But let me tell you she has heard enough, more than enough," vociferates the wrathful lady, "to justify her in renouncing a man whom no virtuous woman could even be a friend to."

"Heavens! madam, what can you mean? What imputations are these with which the foul breath of slander has soiled my name? Who has dared to utter falsehoods about my doings in her presence? Who has concocted this mischievous



deceit to poison her ear against me? And” (turning to poor Daisy) “have *you* believed these infamous inventions? Had you no knowledge of my character? Were we acquaintances of yesterday only? Had you no assurances to set against mere hearsay? Was there nothing in your heart to whisper how true I was, how false were these reports? O Daisy! Daisy! could *you* accuse me? I thought you knew me better.”

“Believe me, Northern—believe me, my friend,” cried the tortured girl, seizing his burning hand; “it was not I who accused you—it was your own misdeeds. I resisted, indeed I did, every rumour that seemed to wrong you; until forced at last (God knows,” she sobbed, “against my will) to think that you—cared more for others than you cared for me.”

“Who—what forced you to such belief?”

"Proofs, proofs, Northern," gulped out poor Daisy from behind her tear-soaked handkerchief.

"Yes; and I know who furnished them. The man whose interest it was to make me seem as profligate a scoundrel as he himself is. De Crecy was the man."

"Lord Northern," remonstrates the lady, suddenly flushing with indignation, "I will not hear Lord de Crecy spoken of in such terms to my face."

"You are right; there is no need for me to abuse him, or disabuse *you*. Soon enough you will discover the hypocrisy of which you have been the dupe."

"No," says she, recovering herself with dignity. "You are unjust to one whose high character I trust ere long you will appreciate as I do. He, at all events, will teach me to forget the

vanities and follies of my childhood. In him I shall find the guide I have lost in my parents. And in awakening from the wild dreams of a feverish passion (which I never ought to have yielded to), I shall seek and find repose in the paternal care of a man whom I can thoroughly respect."

Her ladyship, now put upon her mettle, looked lovelier and more superb than ever. The tears which sparkled in her eyes flashed like brilliants, and her gentle bosom heaved with the consciousness of triumphant virtue. For my part, I can easily understand the condition of her lover at the sight of so much beauty in distress.

"Daisy," he cried in the most passionate of tones, after gazing at her for a moment in rapturous silence; "it is not now too late. You must—you shall be mine. Say but one word, dearest

—I will explain all to Lord de Crecy. If he has the faintest sentiment of honour ; if he has any shadow of affection for you ; if he is capable of the least compunction at plunging you into irreparable sorrow, at making your life one unending life of regret, he will—nay he must and shall release you ! Speak, dearest—why do you not answer me ?”

“Northern, it cannot be ! No. Do not seek to turn me from my purpose. I have long and well considered the step which I have taken. What I have done—am about to do, is, I am well assured, best for the happiness of both of us. You are deceived in your estimate of Lord de Crecy ; and you cannot now comprehend how much reason I have to honour and respect him.”

“Respect !” sneers the listener.

“You are deceived in me,” continued Daisy,

“if you imagine that I am not sufficiently mistress of myself to abide with cheerfulness and courage by the lot which I deliberately have chosen. And you are deceived, dear Northern, in yourself. As you are, you would make no woman happy by marrying her ; for you yourself could not be happy if bound to one woman by ties which you could not sever whenever the whims of your capricious fancy prompted. Do not misapprehend me. Your character is full of noble qualities—qualities which every woman must admire ; but the misfortune of your high position, added to these very qualities, have made what is called success too easy to you, and have thrown temptations in your way which your virtue was not strong enough to withstand. I do not accuse you, Northern ; I do not even blame you. Your good sense and honourable feeling will, I am sure,

impel you to do justice to yourself ; and lead you to fill with distinction the brilliant place to which your abilities and your rank both summon you. Go, my friend, and win the glorious rewards of noble fame, which are already within your grasp. Go, forget me ; and struggle gallantly for a far higher prize. In these days there is work for every man's hand to do. And every time she hears your name mentioned with honour, Daisy Lea's heart will exult in your renown ; she will think with pride of the stimulus she once gave to your best endeavours ; and the good you do will be a joy to her such as the most affectionate of friends alone can feel."

## CHAPTER III.

It would have been well for our noble youth had he followed the good advice of this excellent young lady. But I fear no thoughts were further from his mind when he left her presence, and for some time afterwards, than obedience to those wise and moral precepts. He repented, it is true, of certain passages of his life in Paris and elsewhere ; and bestowed many hearty maledictions on the day he had first set eyes on the fascinating Callypso. But his regrets were not of the highest moral character. They amounted rather to a painful and ineffectual remorse arising out of a comparison between



#### THE MIDLANDS AND OTHERS.

the lovely and spotless creature he had lost, and the meretricious priestess of the foam-born goddess, for whose sake he had neglected her. As to the veteran demirep who had defrauded him of the sweet prize, he vowed a day should come when he would pay Lord de Crecy in his own coin. Meanwhile the baffled youth kicked violently against the pricks of his disappointment. Between the haughty young prince who had never known a rebuff, and the poor lad who had his peck of dirt to swallow like the rest of us, the conflict raged incessantly. He fumed and fretted and turned his petty principality upside down. He starved and smoked, and made himself quite ill. He thought of cudgelling De Crecy, and now his thorny pillow was visited with delirious schemes of carrying off the bride. At last he sank into the slough of deep despair.

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While in this state he would see no one. He devoured Byron. He meditated atheism one day, and had thoughts of starting for New Zealand as a missionary the next. He would choose the darkest and wettest winter evenings for his walks, and lose himself drearily amongst the filthy little streets of London; or moon about under the deserted and dripping yews at the farthest limits of Kensington gardens. Carefully he thrust every newspaper from his sight lest he should be informed when the marriage was to be; or still worse, that it had actually been solemnized. Of course none of the family, not even Selina (who was burning to condole with her brother, and had in fact made several fruitless efforts to turn his mind into the paths of peace which she herself, under similar circumstances, had so successfully pursued) ever breathed the name of Daisy Lea or

her intended husband, in the presence of the rejected lover. He was in ignorance, so far blissful, whether the worst was past or not. But oh! what a pang shot through his heart one afternoon when, walking up Portland Place, a travelling chariot rattled by him drawn by four of Mr. Newman's greys. Will he ever forget those confounded blue post-boys? or their white and glossy hats? or, death and fury! those detestable cockades? A face, as white as the satin these were made of, peered wofully from the chariot window—a face, how lovely and how sad! And back in the recesses of that little chamber—a chamber whose narrow limits necessitated the hatefullest propinquity, reclined another face. Oh! (to the wretched marquis) how disgusting! Yes, 'twas she: 'twas he. In a moment they were gone. But in that brief lapse of time their eyes—the young lady's and

the young gentleman's—had met. And in that short space, what passed severally through their thoughts, none but the most harrowing, the most sensational of novelists could describe.


Who, I ask, can see a couple rattling off in this way without falling into serious meditations on the spot? Who can refrain from clapping the cap of Fortunatus on his head, and accompanying the pair upon their journey, Bless us! What a pace the fancy travels—behind those four grey posters. 'Tis enough to make one's head swim. And if the couple be both young and handsome, the deuce is in it if every one who stands gaping on the pavement don't wish them safely through it—not the pavement—but the journey. But lud! if one or both be old—I refer you to Lord Northern. What think you were his feelings as that chariot galloped past him? May the reader

never know them ! Enough to state, the more he pondered over them the worse his lordship grew. In course of time an inkling of this mental fact began to dawn upon him. He knew his case was, in a sort, past curing ; so he manfully resolved to make the best of it. The duke, who never could be got to enter into his son's calamity, but always alluded to the subject with a jest, persuaded him at last to travel. He took the good advice, and went first to the continent and the East, and subsequently to America. For two whole years he neither saw Daisy, nor corresponded with her, nor heard her name once mentioned. And whether it was the travelling or the absence, he certainly came back an altered man.

While he was abroad the duke had put him into parliament ; and immediately upon his

return he began to take an active part in politics. Both from Germany and America he had imbibed some highly democratic notions: and burned with the generous ardour of youth to advance the interest of the masses. It was about this time that he undertook to enlighten the natives of Longthorpe by a course of lectures upon the social and political state of the four quarters of the globe which he had lately visited. The country was not a little startled at the ultra-liberal tendency of his lordship's views. The squires and clergy especially were nearly as much shocked as they were astonished. But the operatives and mechanics flocked in large numbers to these popular discourses; and were enraptured with the fervid eloquence of the young statesman. The Duke of Midland was unable to keep pace with his son's progressive doctrines. It was enough

for him however that they were not conservative. Mr. Seabright was delighted with them. The worthy parson refrained on principle from obtruding his own politics on his neighbours. He considered that this kind of propagandism was no part of a clergyman's duty ; and moreover, as it was sure to make him enemies, that it might thereby impair his influence as a pastor. Nevertheless he was as deeply interested in the affairs of the state as any man living ; and in many points coincided in the views of his enthusiastic friend. I am afraid he also found secret pleasure in watching the effect which the lecturer produced upon his audience. Had bombshells fallen amongst them greater consternation could not have been exhibited when, on the subject of the church and its connection with the state, the noble marquis took the opportunity to denounce " the cowardice,



the indolence, and worldly self-seeking of those members of the clerical profession who fought against the spirit of inquiry; and preached blind submission to authority, and servile reverence to the dogmas of ignorance and superstition. The days of a national church—the most impertinent question-begging epithet ever imposed upon a free country—were (this trenchant reformer declared) already numbered. It was a system of extortion to perpetuate the bigotry of the few.” When the lecturer reverted to politics, the astounded squires must have thought the Day of Judgment was at hand. “It was useless (he assured them) any longer to bury their heads, like ostriches, in the dust of ancient crotchets. The fiery whirlwind was blowing up. The grumblings of the coming earthquake might be heard. The surface of the social world would be remodelled; and its



present effete encumbrances swept away by the mighty torrent of reform. After this deluge—the Millennium. New institutions would be developed. New classes would vindicate their natural rights. The claims of labour and the majesty of intellect would be exalted to a paramount supremacy; and those who now consumed in idleness the fruits of struggling industry would be gibbeted as scarecrows to terrify the oppressors of all times to come. Do you imagine, gentlemen (the lecturer glanced fiercely at an obese chairman of quarter sessions), that Providence has buckled spurs upon your heels, and saddles upon the backs of others? Do you believe that Heaven confers upon a chosen few a patent for the privileges which you have so abused? that it smiles upon your bloated and selfish apathy? Let me warn you while yet there is a chance for you. The

divine right of kings has long since grown apocryphal. The only right now left 'divine' is the sovereignty of the people. Beware lest you convert the beneficent spirit of reform into the destroying demon of rebellion."

The young orator then proceeded to inform them that democracy was neither more nor less than a law of nature. The democratic principle, he affirmed, was an impulse quite spontaneous, and entirely beyond the power of parliaments and legislators. The history of civilization (his lordship cited some pertinent illustrations) pointed unmistakably to this fact. And henceforth history was to be interpreted by it. The condition of all classes was tending in the direction of political equality. Increasing intelligence and increasing power of combination insured the future self-government of mankind. The latter consi-

deration alone must convince every thoughtful mind how inevitable the movement must be. With a cheap press and ubiquitous locomotion, the influence of sympathetic thought and the power of sympathetic action were hourly telling upon millions—whose mere numerical preponderance must, when combined, overwhelm every obstacle to their will.

These and many similar sentiments were propounded by the marquis upon his return from North America. They were set forth with that vehemence of conviction which is not unfrequently to be observed in the early stages of manhood; a period of life when the dictates of emotion are found preferable to the tedious process of reasoning, and when we despise the caution of our elders as contemptible timidity which impedes all healthy action.

## CHAPTER IV.

It is not difficult to believe that these lectures gave offence. But to no one were they more unsavoury than to the Viscount Lord de Crecy; who once, and once only, was inveigled to become a listener.

This nobleman was furious at the attacks upon his order; and chose to appropriate them as personalities to himself. "Parcel of incendiary rubbish," he exclaimed to Lady de Crecy, when they were at home again; "I wonder how Midland can allow a boy like that to do such a mons'ous deal of harm. Disgraceful, upon my life!"

"Well, I don't see what mischief it can do,"

spoke out her ladyship; "on the contrary, for my part I think it very right that we should be reminded of our duty to the poor."

"Duty to the poor, my love! what on earth has that to do with it? Goodness knows, I am the last person to forget the wants of others; but you can't understand these things, my dear. You do not see what incalculable mischief is done by these intemperate rantings against the aristocracy. They set the lower classes violently against us; and teach the common people to imagine they are as badly off as these abominable stump orators pretend."

"No great stretch of imagination required for *that* I should think," retorts the lady, keeping down her partisanship for—the "common people" of course.

"That's all you know about it!" cries my lord,

who was beginning to smart from a sting in another tender quarter. "The lower classes were never better off—never half so well off as they are now. I'm sick of this blatant nonsense about a corrupt nobility, and an oppressed people. One has heard a great deal too much of such stuff. Every idle rascal who is too lazy to work, and has impudence enough to prate, goes about the country stirring up all the discontent he can. A man ought to be ashamed of himself for uttering such a pack of lies."

"I do not fancy that Lord Northern feels ashamed of himself; nor would he be much flattered by the graceful term you apply to his political opinions."

"I had no thought of flattering him," cries the husband, losing patience at this turn of the argument *ad hominem*. "Far from it, Lady de Crecy,

far from it. There is no need to flatter a cock-comb who has already so good an opinion of himself. And as to his sense of shame madam, I can well believe that *that* is on a par with his veracity and his good taste."

This last sentence was vague, it is true, and, apart from collateral considerations, might not have had much import. To Lady de Crecy, however, it was odiously significant. There was something in the word "shame" mightily obnoxious to her present feelings. The term "madam" too was imputative in the last degree. Daisy de Crecy had certainly never heard of the great Jonathan Wild, nor of his chaste spouse; but I am sure she mentally ejaculated, "Why madam?"

"As to good taste, my Lord de Crecy," she said with scorn, "your own language proves you incapable of understanding what it means: and as

to Lord Northern's 'sense of shame,' I am really at a loss to divine what your words imply."

"Oh of course! of course *you* don't understand me. Ha! ha! naturally, purity and innocence do not know the meaning of duplicity and intrigue. You, I say, do not understand the meaning of Lord Northern's conduct in this house, or wherever he may chance to meet you. No doubt in your eyes he is perfectly ingenuous, most pleasant and agreeable, most charming, fascinating, and seductive,—and *seductive* I repeat, madam. By heaven! the scoundrel takes every opportunity to maintain the place in the affections of my wife, which he held in the heart of Daisy Lea."

"And perhaps, my lord, you will add that I encourage him?"

"By God! madam, I believe you do!"



Lady de Crecy drew herself up, confronted her husband, looked him for a moment full in the face, and did *not* strike a dagger to his heart, only I imagine because she had no such weapon at hand. She turned however on her heel, dashed out of the room, and as she banged the door behind her, gave emphatic utterance to the monosyllable—"Brute!"

Poor Daisy! the consciousness of your own pure-mindedness might have enabled you to bear this and similar not unfrequent outbursts of your husband's jealousy and injustice; but it was too hard to reflect how much you had surrendered for the man who thus maltreated you. It was too provoking to think that he whom you had once regarded with respect should fall so low in your esteem, that far from finding in him support to strengthen you in your self-chosen

struggle, you had but found an instrument to make your torture more complete. Why, why had you so impetuously sacrificed yourself for that girlish notion of Right? Why, unprepared by any novitiate, did you at once and for ever renounce the joys which were beginning to bloom around your young and glowing life? Was the duty so peremptory? Was the call so sacred? "Daisy, Daisy!" a little voice sometimes whispered, "you loved that youth; and thought that youth was false; and pique—pique, my dear not piety, induced you to take the fatal step."

Such inward whisperings were anything but comforting to a wounded and fretting spirit. It would have been soothing to feel even now that she had really acted for the best, that the highest motives, and the highest only, had shaped her stormy course. But she could not quite persuade

herself this was so. It is possible her self analysis might lead her to conclusions not altogether just. It is possible her altered opinion of, and feeling towards, her husband might obstruct the recollection of her former reverence for him, and make her conduct seem to her less disinterested than it was.

Be this as it may, there was but little comfort in looking back. It was known to her that Northern had been miserable for some time after her marriage. She knew that he had abandoned the abominable French actress. He had roved the world over to regain the peace which she herself had blasted. After two long years of absence his love was as true as ever. She had wronged him. She had injured him. She had *jilted* him ! How could she help loving him. And yet it was so wicked ! Then the

battling of conscience alternated with despair; passionate regret gave place to prayers for mercy and protection. One moment the Paradise she yearned for was on earth, the next it was translated to a heavenly sphere. Often she was weak and shattered, but oftener still resigned and strong.

After such scenes as we have just described the wretched viscount would fly into the extremes of penitence and humiliation. He would cast himself at his young wife's feet, and clasp his trembling hands—his beautiful hands, bejewelled with precious rings,—and sob and pray to be forgiven. He would heap all manner of imprecations on his own poor foolish, jealous, frizzled head; and look, and feel indeed, so utterly deplorable, so miserably fond, that Daisy had no heart to torture him nor power to withhold her pardon. But alas, these


tragi-comical relapses had no permanent effect in bridging the chasm between them. Since Lord Northern had come back he was perpetually meeting Daisy, and every time he met her there followed some frightful outbreak.

## CHAPTER V.

WRETCHED as was this state of things, Lady de Crecy managed now and then to find some transient relief from her troubles in the society of Mr. Evans. By-and-by we shall find this gentleman taking a part, though a minor one, in the action of the story; besides which, his discourses with Lady de Crecy serve as a foil to set off the character of that interesting creature. In the present chapter, therefore, we shall first say a few words about Mr. Evans himself, and then, even at the risk of being tedious, give a specimen of their intellectual converse.

The history of their acquaintance was simply

this. Lady de Crecy had a special fondness for the society of artists and men of letters ; one may say in fact, for illustrious personages of every kind. This admiration for talent amounted in her almost to a fault. She would take up people who had nothing to recommend them but mere talent ; and we need not add that she was frequently disappointed and disgusted in consequence. It was of no avail that her friends remonstrated : she would only answer, " Oh but he (or she) is so clever ! " And when her mind was once made up it was difficult to turn her. In accordance with this taste, whenever a new star shone forth in the firmament of society, she was not content until she brought it to shine on her. Every new celebrity had to swell the ranks of her admiring followers. Vanity ? Of course it was. Daisy de Crecy was very vain. Well, Mr. Evans happened



to have tastes of a somewhat similar nature. I do not mean to say that he wanted every poet to write sonnets to his eyebrows (beauty was not one of his conspicuous characteristics); but he loved both art and literature for their own sakes, and was pleased to be much with those who followed these pursuits. This brought him into contact with Lady de Crecy; and being an enthusiastic admirer of the Beautiful, he soon became enamoured of her. Enamoured we have said, and so the word may stand; but not to be taken in the sense in which we should apply it to the marquis. Evans was past forty, and a man of considerable experiences. He had seen and undergone and read and thought more than most men. The result was a philosophic composure of a somewhat cynical cast. He was a close observer of the infinite varieties of the human




character; and though he laughed in his sleeve at the freaks and follies of human passions, he meditated upon the sharp pangs and enduring sorrows which these inflict, with a sadness fully equal to his sense of humour. He had long seen through and through the heart of the lovely Daisy; and knew there was no place there for him—at least not the place he might have sighed for had he been fifteen or twenty years younger. Yet he allowed himself to bask in the sunshine of her friendship and to inhale the luscious fragrance of her character, with a sort of luxurious moral indolence; conscious that he was lying on a bed of roses which threatened to asphyxiate him with their perfume. But still he knew so well by past experience the fatal consequences of such opium eating that he kept the reins of his imagination in hand, ready to give the jade the

curb the moment she grew skittish. Besides, the sweet smiles the coquettish familiarity the flattering confidence to which Lady de Crecy treated him, so obviously proved that she had no misgivings about his interpretation of her, that this very behaviour, which might have turned the head of a less sensible man, was to him a source of safety.

Daisy herself of course knew that Evans was her slave : she liked him none the less for this ; especially as he never once forgot that he was also his own master. She felt moreover that whatever she might do or say he never would forget this fact. So she was thoroughly at ease with him ; and had the delightful conviction that he was in full possession of her secret ; that he perfectly comprehended her situation ; that he sympathized with her ; that he knew her purity as surely as

he knew her love; and consequently—he being endowed with this omniscience respecting her—that she had nothing to hide, and nothing to reveal; and that the pleasant relationship between them was in no danger of being marred by any accident whatsoever.

What can be more agreeable than an intimacy such as here described? There is a charm in such an amity between two persons of opposite sex which no alliance under any other condition affords. So long as the limits of *friendship* are rigidly adhered to, each of necessity fosters the most delightful credulity in the latent perfections of the other. The illusions may be preserved for ever, provided the dangerous tree of knowledge be not robbed of its tempting fruit. If the circumstances of the case do not of themselves obviate the present possibility of every correlation more intimate



than friendship, if there be any *arriere pensée* on either side that more than this may or might be either solicited or granted, from that moment self-consciousness steps in ; the stamp of awkwardness is set on every thought and act ; and the *naïveté* and *abandon*, which contribute so much, are thenceforth supplanted by artfulness and suspicion.

Happily the friendship between Lady de Crecy and Mr. Evans was secure against disturbance, and the congeniality of their tastes served greatly to cement it. She would often draw him into argument upon subjects which both took interest in ; and while she flattered him by her respect for his opinions, she maintained her own with no less ingenuity than warmth. Various were the subjects of their amicable controversies. Literature and the fine arts were their favourite topics.

But sometimes she would contrive to allure him into discussions on graver questions, such as theology and metaphysics. He however was remarkably loath to enter upon such matters. Not that they were by any means uninteresting to him (for he had spent many years in laborious study of them), but having found that these labours to extend his knowledge and range of thought separated him more and more from received opinions, and that every new truth gained by mental effort was a fresh source of disagreement and offence to his fellow-men,—although he did not desist from his studies, he declined to discuss them with any one who was not, like himself, a student.

And now let us hear how pleasantly they would talk together.

“ Why do you not write a book, Mr. Evans? ”

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Lady de Crecy one day asked him. "You are just the very person whom nature intended to write books for my especial amusement."

"And will you really do me the honour to read my book if I should ever write one?"

"Will I? Why for the last three years I have done nothing but read anonymous works in hopes of detecting you amongst the great unknown."

"Why do you think that I should write a book at all?"

"Because if I had a hundredth part of your ideas I should do nothing else but write. I can fancy no occupation more delightful than at once disburdening one's own mind, and giving pleasure and instruction to others."

"Well; and why should I write anonymously?"

“Because a man who holds so many abominable heresies must needs be ashamed of them. Seriously, why do you not write?”

“Tell me what I am to write about.”

“Write as you sometimes talk to me.”

“I would with pleasure if you were my only reader. But you forget the critics, the *dira gens* who sit in darkness, filing their cruel fangs. Now-a-days their only function is to destroy.”

“Bother the critics! who cares for them! Write for the million—the million who, like me, want to be instructed and entertained. What’s the use of all your learning and all your thinking if they are to perish with you? Are men endowed with talent and unlimited leisure such as yours for nothing? Have you no conscience? Are you not galled by a sense of duty? Can you live on the bread of idleness without compunc-

tion? Ah! if I were a man, a clever man, wouldn't I do something to stir the thin blood of this timid-hearted world, and rouse it into noble action. Have you no ambition, Mr. Evans?"

"Yes, for a quiet life a good deal, Lady de Crecy. But when a man is past forty, other ambition is apt to cool. The temple of Fame is already rather crowded. A few great names are all that the little scroll of this little planet's little history has room for. Why should poor ephemera like me add their feeble buzz to the ineffectual din? There are too many books already: too many millions of good ones that can never be read. Besides, it is easy to read too much and think too little. No, my lady, no more books."

"But why should your contribution be to the rubbish heap? You have thought and read much.



There is always room for excellence ; and since the masses must have something new, why not yours as well as anybody's ?”

“ Since you insist on it then, what shall it be ?”

“ Anything. A novel—a volume of essays. Out of the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh.”

“ Not always,” returned Mr. Evans, with a quiet smile. Her ladyship acknowledged it with the faintest of blushes. “ But neither a novel nor an essay could I write to save my life.”

“ Why not pray ? ”

“ A novel, which every one fancies (till he has tried and failed) is the easiest thing to write, requires very special talents, directed by consummate art. I am deficient in both. Then he who writes an essay should be convinced of what he teaches ; again the requisite does not suit me.”

“How miserable you must be then, without convictions! Do you really believe in nothing?” asked her ladyship.

“Far from it; I believe in pleasure and pain: in turtle soup and the gout, for instance. I believe sometimes, not always, in my eyes. I have no doubts whatever about beauty; and when I am in the presence of it——”

“You are a miserable scoffer, sir! you have no belief in what is serious or solemn. You have no belief in the soul, in life immortal. No hope, no belief, in anything but annihilation and nothingness. I pity you!

‘Alas for love! if this were all,  
And nought beyond the grave.’”

And the fair saint's thoughts were transported in a moment to a heaven of her own sweet making. Mr. Evans looked at her with intense admira-

tion, which she presently detecting, started off again upon the previous question.

“Assuming,” said she, “that your ignorance and your scepticism disqualify you for an instructor (and I quite agree with you as to the latter objection—I would make an *auto-da-fé* of you this minute if I had my way); yet if you were not so lazy you surely might write a novel. If I had but the patience to undergo the manual labour (I tried once, and the dreadful feeling that I had, goodness knows how many hundreds or thousands of pages to fill, stopped me before I got through my first chapter!) if I could but endure the torture of cramping my little finger for such a length of time, I could write the best novel that ever was read. You can’t think how I would make you cry and laugh, and how I would harass you with thrilling incidents.

Honestly, is it not worth the pains to write something which thousands shall read and take delight in? Think how many sick-beds and sorrowing hearts have been cheated of their pains by such men as Walter Scott, Goldsmith, and others I could name. Did you read, not long ago, in the newspapers how a murderer who had escaped to America was caught and brought back to be hanged? and how all the voyage home he night and day read one of ——'s novels? What must the author have felt when he heard that story? Think of the wretched man groaning under the horrible consciousness of his crime, haunted by the hideous vision of his mutilated victim, and by the appalling scaffold on which in a few days his own existence would terminate. What must the author have felt whose magic pen had exorcised such demon thoughts, and filled the fancy of this poor wretch

with images of goodness and beauty, and bright hopes and happy endings? I know what I should have felt. I should have been bowed down with overwhelming gratitude to the Great Being who had entrusted me with this mighty gift of doing good."

"Ah!" sighed Mr. Evans, with another look of admiration at the animated speaker, "what would I give for your enthusiasm and fiery imagination! If I had but one spark of your glowing genius to warm up the embers of my own cold fancy, I would at least make an effort to shed a cheering ray on the cares of this toilsome life. But, alas! my dear lady, enthusiasm is one of those volatile essences whose strength depends on being stoppered. My enthusiasm has evaporated. There was a time when life seemed to me as brilliant and as hopeful as it seems to you. I too

was once inflamed with ardent aspirations, generous impulses, and towering resolutions. Two sad causes have dispelled these bright illusions of my early days—experience—the terrible discrepancy between imagination and reality, and——”

“Disappointed love?” interposed the lady.

“A dyspeptic liver!” returned Mr. Evans.

“Bah!” cries Daisy, “don’t tell me about your horrid liver; I hate your odious materialism. Are we nothing but livers? Is there no spiritual principle in man superior to this vile body? Yes, sir, *vile* body. Don’t look at me like that. I have no patience with people who really have wits, and use them only to find a plea for indolence.”

Mr. Evans found so much pleasure in the society of Lady de Crecy that to keep her engaged in conversation he would often ramble on

discursively, without any other motive. And if they happened to be interrupted, as they were now by the entrance of the lady's husband (whose presence was always a sad damper to her flow of pleasant ideas), Evans would renew the debate directly he and she were alone again. So on this occasion, when Lord de Crecy was gone (and he had no taste for conversations which he could not take part in) Evans encouraged Lady de Crecy to return to the discussion. This she willingly did; and entered into a long colloquy upon art; which we reluctantly omit, fearing to exhaust the reader's patience. We may state, however, that the discussion became sufficiently animated upon Mr. Evans enunciating the doctrine that the end and aim of art is pleasure, and that the means to this end is the imitation of nature. Lady de Crecy objected to both pro-



positions. She maintained that such an end would be subversive of morality: and argued that nature exhibited much that was vulgar, offensive, and degrading. Mr. Evans replied that only the purest of pleasures, moral and intellectual, were intended, and that he did not mean indiscriminate imitation. "Art," said he, "is essentially eclectic. And whereas with nature pleasure is a mere accessory, it is the business of art (as Schiller says) to ascertain under what conditions enjoyment is attainable; and having done so, to combine and represent them by a rational method."

And now with her customary intelligence Lady de Crecy answered, "Granting that pleasure should be the end of art, and certainly that whatever is repugnant should find no place in its delineations, what say you to the pleasure



which all—even the most cultivated—find in the Horrible? How do you reconcile your theory with the laws of tragic art, for instance? whose express purpose it is to excite horror and compassion.”

“Compassion,” said Evans, “and the horror which the sight of moral pain excites are not repugnant. They are, on the contrary, highly pleasurable states of mind. It is not easy however to account for the enjoyment we experience in contemplating some forms of misery. Nevertheless it is a fact; but whether an ultimate fact or not is an undecided question. The only solution seems to be that the strongest emotions are the best antidote for *ennui*.”

“Good heavens!” cried Daisy, “do you imagine then that human beings would die of tedium if they were not kept alive by seeing one

another suffer? Will you have the impudence to tell me that when I cry at the play, which I often do (unless, by the way, I am going to a party afterwards), this is nothing but sheer selfishness on my part? You cannot think how genuinely miserable those stage sorrows make me. Yet it never occurred to me that this misery was inhuman."

"Indeed I know full well how tender-hearted you can be, when an appropriate object touches you (Mr. Evans smiled): but it is not to selfish motives that I impute compassion for suffering; though some do think our own freedom from pain a reason for the delight we take in seeing others afflicted by it. No; mental langour, the absence of healthy occupation, the care which comes of preying on oneself, and which gradually grows oppressive to the point of madness—these make

us rush eagerly into new emotion. And emotion, taking full possession of us, releases us from the tortures of *ennui*. Everything which keeps us from ourselves is an æsthetic. Hence the eagerness of the masses for action. Hence the fascination of the racecourse, the gaming-table, public executions, murders, scandals, accidents, and so forth."

"But why have we this decided preference for horrors?"

"Because the emotions which they excite are more powerful than others. Pity, terror, suspense, are far more potent than sympathy with happiness, for example."

"Ah!" says Daisy, naively, "I hope this want of sympathy with happiness is universal. The moment people are made happy on the stage I care no more about them. I always thought till

now, this was a special instance of my own depravity. But why do we not sympathize with happiness?"

"Well," said Evans, with a humourous air, "those who are completely happy do not want compassion. Then, too, the causes of that happiness admit of no participation. It may be possible to make two bites of a cherry; a third mouth is *de trop*. Besides, if I happen to be without appetite myself, I would rather not look on while another takes his fill."

"But happiness is not always of this kind," returns the lady.

"Of which kind?" inquires the gentleman.

"Of the kind you mean," says she. "How stupid you are."

"When it is not," says Mr. Evans, "nothing hinders our taking part in it."

## CHAPTER VI.

LADY DE CRECY spent many pleasant hours at different times in conversation like the foregoing. It was an immense comfort to her, having Mr. Evans at her beck. Lord Northern being singularly free from bashfulness seized every occasion, whether opportune or not, to declare his passion and bemoan his wretched fate, and it saved poor Daisy many a pang—this power of summoning to her rescue one who was ever ready to answer her signals of distress. Nor were other circumstances wanting to thwart the impatient marquis, or favour the virtuous Daisy. The house was

filled with guests : the party was a large one : and some one or other was sure to be in the way to baffle the young man's distracted wishes. Amongst those who in addition to Mr. Evans served to screen the afflicted lady was a little Mrs. Finch, widow of one captain so named, to whom she had been married on the very day that officer left England to join his regiment in the East. The poor fellow, who caught a fever on the transport, died on the passage out ; and his widow in due course became the mother of as sweet a little gipsy as ever you set eyes on. We may mention here that mother and daughter were invited to Tinselby for the sole purpose of gratifying the old duke. He had a passion for the child, and it was the most pleasing sight imaginable to see these two together.

But to Lady de Crecy Mrs. Finch was useful,

in that the latter had always a vast deal to say on the perfections of her departed Charley. At a moment's notice either Charley or Miss Sybil could be turned on; and so fluent was the supply that any attempt of Northern's while Mrs. Finch was near, could be swamped with the greatest ease.

Mr. Seabright, too, and Mrs., were both serviceable. Notwithstanding his simplicity, the rector was very shrewd. Whenever he saw Daisy in danger from the approaches of the marquis, he would use his supposed want of penetration to disturb them, as if unwittingly. The parson's wife had reasons of her own for preventing their *tête-a-têtes*. But in Mrs. Seabright's want of tact there was not the least pretence. Lady Selina, as we know, was for ever on the alert; and so great was her success, that her

brother, and even Daisy, wished her at the very place from which she strove to rescue them.

And what shall we say of Helen? Was she anxious that her presence should influence the young marquis? I fancy her own state of mind was anything but comfortable: she could not have derived much pleasure from reflecting on the recent passages between herself and Wharton.

And yet when Lord Northern chose to flirt with her, Miss Seabright was not unhappy. At such times she reconciled her conscience by blaming Mr. Wharton. His obstinacy had been *too* provoking; and if any *accident* prevented her from marrying him it would be entirely owing to his blundering proposal. Notwithstanding this indecision, Miss Nelly considered herself in love with Wharton, and if she flirted with Lord Northern, Lord Northern did sometimes flirt



with her. Both of them indulged in outward form the passion they were forced to disappoint. As he was much more desperately in love than she, he never gave her a thought when she was out of sight. Helen, on the contrary, did often think of Northern. And had her own devoted swain guessed the secrets of that fickle heart, he would perhaps have plunged forthwith into the arms of the first inflammatory *fraulein* who happened to pay court to him. Fortunately or unfortunately (who knows which?) the theory of vision, as propounded by a philosophic bishop, is no less true of moral than of actual sight. As distance, which we suppose we see, is but an inference from form and colour, so the charms that love beholds are inferences from attributes (generally these very ones) which love accepts as signs of them. The girdle of Venus could not have conferred

more perfections upon Miss Helen than did the eyes of Mr Wharton. To him she was "a phantom of delight." And under this impression he wrote to her as follows :—

"DEAR MISS SEABRIGHT,—

"Whether you will so far have forgiven my rash and impertinent declaration as to grant the audience I now crave, is more than I venture to assume. At least I may rely on the privileges of a friend. You will not condemn me unheard: for I neither can nor will believe that the folly I was guilty of has effaced from your recollection a past that to me is ever present; although I may have reason to fear that the sweetness of it, so unspeakable to myself, is shared by you in no commensurate degree. What atonement can I offer? What plea can I allege for my inordinate presumption? I feel that to excuse is only to accuse myself. Every pretext I can think of, every attempt at extenuation, convicts me more irreparably of the great offence—my love.

"And what is the sentence that you have passed upon


me? You at whose hands I looked for mercy—yes indeed, for something more! The wretch that is steeped in misery and the culprit nursed in wealth receive from even-handed justice the penalty of their crimes. The sentence may be the same for both: but who shall gauge the punishment? The condition of the first may be improved; the condition of the latter is sometimes worse than death. Did I not love you, dearest Helen (pardon me, for by this title you live in all my thoughts); did I not love you, my lot would now be one of patient apathy. But as with the offender plucked from some high eminence, my despair must now be measured by my former happiness. Long ere you were conscious of it, I worshipped you with a homage profound as it was secret. Every word that you have spoken in my hearing within these four years past, every look and every gesture, are engraven on my memory; and all my admiration was interwoven with the hope that a time would surely come when I should hold your hand in mine, and recall to you, in the blest security of possession, how on such a day your manner had alarmed me, how the next I was

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confident again ; how once you leaned upon my arm and seemed to cling to my support ; how you blushed when I lifted you to your saddle ; how you started when we met by accident. Dear Helen, it would drive me mad to summon up such images and then be forced to regard them as delusions. But if your beauty has so entranced me, the perfection of your moral nature will save me from such a fate. It is in this immeasurable superiority of yours that I have anchored my love and trust. In the pictures which my imagination painted of the happy lot awaiting us, it was not as a companion merely and a friend that I was wont to think of you, but as one whose lasting influence would purify my coarser nature, and exalt me by its refinement to the levels of its own excellence.

“ And now, dear Miss Seabright, do not impute to me a want of delicacy if, in the midst of my laments over a precipitancy which I have dearly paid for, do not be offended with me if I allude to one *possible* cause of your rejection of my suit : I mean your preference for another. I cannot but reflect that my estimate of your character, my interpretation of your

kind and gentle conduct towards me, may be over sanguine. I cannot conceal from myself how humble are my pretensions in comparison with those of *one* in particular who aspires to your hand. That one I am well aware has many advantages which I have not. He has hereditary rank to offer : while I pretend to no distinction but such as I may earn. To him the folding-doors of fashion are flung open ; to me the only ingress to the great world may be called the area gate, and by the path of flunkeyism I humbly decline to enter. But notwithstanding this discrepancy, so invidious to myself, I ask, with satisfaction, is yours a mind to be carried away by a vulgar admiration for mere rank ? No ; however exalted that rank may be, there is that in you, dear Helen, which must impel you to consider before all things the character of the man whom you elect to be your husband. If you reject me, I must still continue to love you ; and by my true and deep affection for you let me caution and let me entreat you to beware of surface brilliancy, and fascinating artifices learnt in the school of profligacy and selfishness, of protestations that are heartless, of the



advances, in short, of one who may deceive you, and with whom you never could be happy.

“ I risk much I know by openly aspersing a rival. There is something which smacks of meanness in calumniating a competitor. But believe me, no selfish design of prejudicing you against another for my own sake merely could ever induce me to speak as I have spoken. Nothing, as God is my witness, but the desire for your happiness could justify to myself the warning I here so earnestly impress upon you.

“ Ah Helen ! what bliss is in the thought that the right might have been mine to warn and guide you throughout life. How great is now the pleasure of addressing you. How bitter the obligation to be silent. But I will not torture myself with the notion that this silence is for ever. I cannot bring myself to think of you as lost to me entirely. The enduring tenderness of my own devotion seems a pledge of some return from you. I ask no answer now : I am too fearful of what it might contain. But I will feed on delicious hopes and memories ; and some day will come back to repeat how faithfully I love you.”

The effects produced by this flowery epistle on the heart of the young damsel to whom it was indited were of a conflicting kind. The first pages were full of contrition and humility; and though the style might seem rather high flown for a man overcome with feeling, this altogether escaped Miss Nelly's observation; and so far as that went, she thought it very fine. The passages which related to her perfections occasioned her unmixed delight. She read them several times over; and for a moment or two felt that she could never again refuse a lover who appreciated her merits with such discrimination, and adored her with such exemplary fondness. But the latter portion of the letter was not quite so satisfactory.

It would have been better for the writer had he confined himself to the enumeration of Miss Helen's charms, and left the imperfections of Sir

Percy Froth to discover themselves in the natural course of things. The fact is, the only rival that Wharton really had was Northern. And though this never occurred to Wharton (for he knew all about the De Crecy affair), it did very often occur to Helen. The consequence was, the whole of his allusions to an objectionable suitor were misconstrued by the reader of them. The references to hereditary rank, the obsequious attitude of the fashionable world, etc., could apply to no one (so Helen thought) but the Duke of Midland's son. Wharton's point of view was never realized by her. The distinction he had drawn between himself—a middle class and professional man, on the one hand, and the baronet and officer in the guards upon the other, was a distinction which to do her justice, the girl had never dreamed of. To Helen therefore, these sarcasms sounded like spiteful



jealousy. When moreover the letter went on to warn her (as she imagined) against her old friend and playmate, with direct animadversion on his superficial lustre, his profligate and selfish habits, and the insincerity of his professions—these charges produced nothing but resentment; and caused her annoyance which counterbalanced the pleasure derived from the choicest passages of the letter. There were besides two other considerations, which acted by no means beneficially for Wharton. He had alleged (according to Helen's supposition) that Northern was in love with her; and he promised upon his own part to return and claim her hand. What was the twofold inference? After all, then, she might be Duchess of Midland; and failing this, she could at any time fall back on Wharton.

The same day this letter reached Tinselby Miss



Seabright despatched the following to her friend Miss Lavinia Mumford.

“ DEAREST MISS LAVINIA,—

“You will I know be glad to have a line from me, letting you know how we are all getting on at Tinselby. First, I must tell you we are enjoying ourselves *immensely*. We are the gayest of the gay. Always some fun going on every day. Yesterday we went to see the hounds meet at Tucker’s bridge, and Daisy de Crecy most good-naturedly mounted me on her bay mare. We had a splendid gallop. I went like a bird, Northern giving me a lead all the time, and riding himself like mad. Two nights ago we had a dance, which I thought awfully jolly, for you know I do love it. We have nobody staying in the house except our ‘Tramways’ party, except little Mrs. Finch, who is a regular duck, and the child of course, which the darling old duke is as silly and funny with as ever. It is *too* charming to see them together : she sits on his knee, and they tell each other fairy tales all day long. Daisy is more extravagant than ever : I have not seen

the same gown more than twice since I came ; every-thing gorgeous, even to the petticoats, which—only fancy—are trimmed with real Valenciennes lace ! She always wears her smartest jewels too—at night I mean, but quite on ordinary occasions. But every-thing *she* does is magnificent. You should hear poor dear mamma go on about her. Mamma says they—the De Crécys, I mean—can't last long at the rate they are going. Daisy spends a thousand times more than the duchess, for, like the latter, she gives away reck-lessly (so I understand), and also spends a fearful lot here, and in London. You do know Mr. Evans, don't you ? He is the driest old man—I mean in the way of fun ; though why I call him old goodness knows. Daisy is so fond of him, and I must say I think him very jolly too. He is very *civil* to me, and so, by the way, is a certain colonel ; you never saw anything half so attentive, my dear, (but this is quite between our-selves). I do not know what *somebody* would say if *he* were here. You know who ! Either he (Sir P. F. *i.e.*) or little Lord St. Kitts, are always in one's pocket. And as to that absurd man, Mr. Terrier—well, I won't

say any more, or you will fancy your humble servant has grown suddenly vain, but if he doesn't make me or Miss Lanyard an offer (heaven knows which it will be) my name's not Nelly Seabright. Talking of *that*, by the way, I have had a letter from your *friend* Mr. W., and I must say, my dear Miss Mumford, that it is not altogether what I should have expected from *him*. I do not mean that it is at all cool, or that sort of thing; on the contrary, I must admit it is flattering to poor me. But why should he think to ingratiate himself with me, or any one else, by abusing in the most *merciless* way a third party? And of all others to attack *one* who is the last person in the world to deserve it. He is greatly mistaken if he thinks this sort of thing could possibly be agreeable to me. And I must say I wonder at his doing it, and *do* think it *too* odious of him. I can't tell you how provoked I am, for he knows as well as I do, how intimate I am with the person against whom he warns me; and how much attached I necessarily must be to one who I have a real *regard* for. Of course I would not write all this to a *living soul* if I didn't know how secret you always

were, and how thoroughly one can trust you and say *everything* to you which one cannot do to others. There is no one in the world I have more *respect* for than Wharton—you, dear, are as well aware of that fact as any one, indeed I may say much better; but no woman respects jealousy, at least I don't for one, and I would rather not have my friends—my *best* friends abused. There! you see how he has ruffled my feathers: I dare say I shall get over it, but there's nothing like having it out. So now as Daisy is waiting for a walk, pray excuse this horrid scrawl, and believe me *semper idem*, as papa says,

„NELLY.”

Miss Mumford read the above twice carefully through before she folded it as carefully up and placed it in her pocket. The habitual seriousness of her features underwent no change; and had one been an invisible spectator of her movements, it would have been impossible to detect the impression which this letter made upon her. It did,

however, occasion her considerable disturbance. It was not the tone or style of the letter that provoked her (she was too thoroughly conversant with Miss Seabright's character and jaunty mode of expressing herself to think much of that); but the old maid was annoyed on account of the lover to whom she wished success. She was annoyed on account of Helen's resentment at Wharton's abuse of Froth (for who but Froth could Wharton have abused?) and more than this, she was annoyed at Helen's open avowal of attachment to the perfidious baronet. For her part, she had been pretty confident until now that sooner or later Helen would become the daughter-in-law of her own dear Mombrun. She had always wished this might happen, and the strength of her wishes had fostered the belief. Now however these hopes sustained a shock. With all her

affection for Helen, an affection partly ascribable to association, for the girl had grown up almost under the shadow of her roof, she could not but be sensible that Helen's capricious waywardness might have serious consequences for her friends. After considering the matter very deliberately she sat herself down to write the following letters.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,"—

'Twas thus she always addressed Mombrun.

"Your last truly kind letter should not have remained so long unanswered had I not been confined to my chamber these three days past with an unusually severe attack. Pray do not suffer my pecuniary affairs to occasion you so much anxiety. Rest assured I shall be well satisfied with whatever investments you may decide upon. I have, as you know, implicit reliance in the soundness of your judgment; and as I myself am but a poor hand at business, I am quite contented to leave the disposal of the £1000 with you; and must again repeat my sincere

gratitude for the amiable interest you have exhibited in my behalf. Of far greater moment to me just now is the state of Hugh's prospects with respect to H.S. I have this day received a letter from Tinselby ; and am led to think that Sir P. is more favoured than we had supposed. I cannot say how vastly I dislike the man and all his modish airs. But unfortunately to a girl so inexperienced as H. his sprightly parts may prove too seductive for her constancy.

“ It appears that Hugh has lately written to her, and has stigmatized too roundly F.'s character. She, I regret to say, seems mightily put out at this ; and under the sting of (as we will hope) a momentary displeasure, expatiates with no little asperity on our poor boy's conduct. Please God, however, who ordains all for the best, matters will wear a pleasanter aspect against Hugh comes back.

“ Excuse a dull letter (my spirits being equal to no better) ; and believe me, dear Friend,

“ Ever yours affectionately,

“ L. MUMFORD.”

“ P.S. I am writing to Germany by the same post.



If, therefore, you are in correspondence with Hugh there will be no need to allude to any communication with me on the above subject, as I shall take care to acquaint him with whatever intelligence it may be in my power to divulge."

The second letter was to Wharton. It ran thus:—

"MY DEAR HUGH,—

"I have but little of consequence to impart to you. Since I wrote to you last Monday se'nnight, I have not heard a word from Tinselby until to-day when I received a few lines from dear Helen. She is enjoying excellent health, which I know it will give you pleasure to hear. Some reference was made to your name; and although it is not my practice to cite passages from the letters of my friends, I may so far ease your anxiety as to state that you were spoken of in high terms. I gathered from the same source that a letter had lately been received from you; in which you had (somewhat indiscreetly, as I apprehend) expressed yourself freely with reference to Colonel F.'s character. This I would avoid doing in future, for

I cannot but think such a fop as he is must in due season discover his own unworthiness.

“Forgive this little piece of caution. I am induced to write thus much by a suspicion that your animadversions were not so well received as they might have been. Indeed, they called forth some expressions in defence of Sir P., which (though these may be set down to the score of a spirited opposition) are not what I would wish to recur; for we are apt to think of people in the way we allow ourselves to speak of them.

“I quite concur in the prudence of your resolve to bide your time, and seriously feel that such proof of deep and steady attachment ought to have weight. And I trust it may. I shall have unchanged interest in everything that turns up: and you may rely on my putting you in immediate possession of any news of importance.

“The assurance of your good faith in my regard, gave me true pleasure; though my opinion of your mind and character would have prevented my expecting you to change. I always look upon you in the light of a

true friend, a rare possession in this trying world, and prized accordingly. I only regret not having been of the use to you that I could wish.

“Yours very affectionately,

“L. M.”

“P.S. I received a letter from Mr. Mombrun not long since. He mentioned you with his customary affection and warm-heartedness. He writes in good spirits ; though these I fear are subject to frequent fits of depression.”

## CHAPTER VII.

WHATEVER might be the state of the father's spirits, that of the son was by no means elated at the receipt of Miss Lavinia's letter. She had tendered her advice in the most cautious of terms, and had hinted at Miss Seabright's displeasure, as if Miss Seabright had but hinted this to her. Wharton, however, who knew the old maid's guarded habit of expressing herself, perceived at a glance that Miss Mumford was more disappointed than she confessed to be. Luckily for our engineer, his was the very reverse of a fidgety temperament. He now perfectly understood how

precarious was his tenure of his lady love's affections. He no longer regarded Froth as an insignificant rival; and looked upon himself (so far, that is, as concerned Helen's opinion of him) as a very ordinary individual, with nothing to recommend him to so peerless a being, save certain qualities which she had had no opportunity of discerning.

There was quite sufficient in his case to feed the most ravenous appetite for misery: but though in love, his habits of self-control enabled him to resist the alluring sustenance. He occupied himself vigorously with the business on which he had been summoned into Germany. And when disengaged, he resolutely turned his thoughts (not away from Miss Helen, but) from the prospect of losing her; which he felt it would entirely incapacitate him to ponder over. The very same

determination which forced him to declare himself, cost what it might, enabled him to bend his will to his judgment with a doggedness that would have done honour to a Spartan.

The works in which he was engaged lay in the vicinity of Aix la Chapelle; and he made this ancient town his head-quarters. Here with characteristic resolution he imbibed the mephitic waters, which, as it is said, do sometimes heal the wounds inflicted by the fiery darts of Love. Here, albeit not fond of music, he diligently attended the daily concerts in the Kursaal: and wondered, as a man of business might, how such a host of tradesmen could find so many hours at midday for fiddling, smoking, maitrank, coffee, schnaps, dominoes, and talk. He noted the amazing ugliness of the women; but it must be remembered that he compared every woman's face with a

certain pattern which threw all others into shade. Great was the variety of his own compatriots, whose elegant peculiarities also helped to divert his thoughts from melancholy. No well-bred son of Albion can be otherwise than gratified with the superiority of his countrymen over the native inhabitants of foreign cities. The charming neglect of personal appearance, the perfect ease of manner in every place of public resort, the marked contempt for the silly superstitions exhibited in their churches, etc., are all pleasing evidences of British superiority, and must as such be exhilarating to that most gloomy of human beings—an Englishman in love. Not however with his own countrymen did the proud young engineer condescend to associate. The only one of these whose acquaintance was agreeable to him, in his present frame of mind, was that of an accom-

plished and delightful old gentleman, who had resided about thirty years in the neighbouring town of Burtscheid, and who procured a modest livelihood by teaching the English tongue. With this pleasing and somewhat eccentric person Mr. Wharton became exceedingly intimate. Mr. Spilman, so the language master was named, happened to be an excellent chess-player, and many were the hard battles fought by these two, over cigars and coffee, in their respective lodgings, or at some favourite gast-haus, where they took their meals together. Occasionally, when Wharton happened to have a favourable packet from Miss Mumford, he would invite his friend to a feast at the table d'hôte; where Mr. Spilman abstemiously partook of the greasy viands, but did not refuse the delicious Schartzhofberger, with which his host supplied him. By-and-by, as the



spring came on, the two would spend the afternoon in the pleasant gardens of the Hospital; or hire a *wagen* and drive to the beautiful woods of Rondeheim. Here they would listen to the nightingales, or inspired by generous Moselwein and the soothing perfume of tobacco, Spilman would quaintly recount, with surprising detail, endless histories of countless individuals with whom he had come in contact during his residence in Aachen.

But despite their intimacy, and the frequency of these junketings, and the many confidential hours they spent together, not one syllable did Wharton ever breathe about his love affair. Not that Mr. Spilman was devoid of sympathy; he would have listened with the greatest interest to Wharton's story, and any other lover would have found infinite relief in deluging such patient ears with the boundless ocean of love's distress. But it is

a significant fact that Wharton kept his sentiment to himself. In truth, with the one exception of Miss Mumford (for Mombrun was not strictly speaking in his confidence) he never mentioned the subject to, nor sought consolation from, a single being.

Mr. Spilman himself however was communicative enough. One day, when they were strolling together in the pleasant paths of the Louisberg, the old gentleman narrating as usual, and Wharton wondering when he should receive another letter from Miss Mumford, the engineer's attention was suddenly arrested by the mention of Mombrun.

"Who?" says he, "who did you say—Mombrun?"

"Yes," says Spilman, "do you know a man of that name?"

"I do indeed," says Wharton, "but it may not be the same."

“The name,” says Spilman, “is so uncommon that probably it is. So I will say no more about him.”

“Nay,” returned the other, smiling, “he is no particular friend of mine. True, I have known Mombrun all my life, and I fancy he was an acquaintance of my father’s also, he often speaks as if he had been: but there is nothing much in common between us. He is not the sort of man I have much respect for.”

“In that case,” says Spilman, “he may be the man I mean. The Mombrun I speak of, would be about sixty now, I suppose, perhaps more; a tall stout man, with sandy hair and bushy whiskers.”

“As to the hair, there is not much of that left, and the little he has is dyed black. He has a broad flat face, and notably small eyes.”

“Ay, that’s he, I make no doubt.”

“And what of him?” asked Wharton.

“Perhaps I had better hold my tongue,”  
replies his friend.

“Not at all: I shall neither be astonished nor  
offended by anything you have to tell of him.”

“Well,” says Mr. Spilman, “I was about to tell  
you—this Mombrun arrived at Aix soon after  
the first year of my coming here. At that time  
it was my custom to dine every day at the Kaffee  
Duensing—we played the *musio* there two or three  
nights ago, you may remember; and Mr. Mom-  
brun generally dined at Duensing’s at the same  
hour. He is, or was, a person of remarkably  
affable manners; and, unlike the majority of our  
fellow-countrymen, he invariably saluted me with  
courtesy, and engaged at once in conversation in  
the friendliest way imaginable. I became pre-

possessed in the man's favour; for he was brimming over with cordiality, and what the French expressively call *bonhomie*—a word for which we have no precise synonym, though perhaps 'good-nature' is as near akin to it as any."

"Well?" says Wharton, impatiently.

"I beg your pardon. Mombrun's friendliness, I must add, his conviviality—he could tell a story (and invent one) better than any man I ever met—induced me to court his society. Being myself a poor man, I was flattered by his willingness to associate with me, especially as he knew both from my lips and his own observation what my humble circumstances were. As to *his* means I had as yet no power of judging. He lived neither extravagantly nor the reverse. To be sure, his conversation was frequently interlarded with the names of many noblemen, with whom he gave

me to understand he was vastly intimate. He also spoke of having travelled on the continent with his own carriages and retinue ; and I think it was in Italy, while on his way to the Duke of Alma Viva, that his wife, so he told me, lost nearly two thousand pounds worth of diamonds, by the hinder portion of his carriage—the ‘ rumble ’ it is called, I believe—becoming detached, without their knowledge, in consequence of the speed at which he always travelled. He talked a good deal too of his country-seat and castle, and left his cards right and left with “ Château Mombrun ” printed on them. The château, if I remember rightly, was situate in the island of Guernsey or Jersey, I will not be certain which. As however I, before this, had met with persons who talked largely of wealth which they themselves did not possess, I accepted these statements with caution.

Nevertheless I had no sufficient reason to disbelieve them. And as to Mr. Mombrun's outward appearance, he was always well dressed—I may say sumptuously so, after the manner, as I suppose, of English noblemen. His hat, for instance, was of the style much worn in the days of his late majesty, wide in the brim and curved considerably more than is now the fashion. His jabot was unusually extensive, and he wore a massive gold chain, which was displayed with careful negligence about the velvet front and collar of his surtout."

"Ah!" laughed Wharton "the very man, and a pretty charlatan he looks."

"At first," pursued Mr. Spilman, "he occupied lodgings in the Harscampstrasse, but exchanged these after ten days or so for a suite of apartments in one of the first hotels in the town, kept at that time by Herr Zuckertort; who, I must tell

you, had a very handsome wife and a still prettier daughter.

“In these new quarters Mr. Mombrun contrived to live for some time in the greatest luxury ; but, as I subsequently ascertained, without making any payment whatever for value received. It was during this period that he called one evening at my lodgings, and after much periphrasis and repeated floods of tears informed me that owing to sudden and unexpected reverses, he found himself for the moment—for the moment, mind—without funds adequate even to his immediate requirements. He stated that this temporary difficulty threatened to involve him in the most complicated misfortunes : that the mere want of a five thaler note to settle his laundress’ bill, and a few groschen to pay the porter for his letters, would so expose his forlorn situation that his credit



would be utterly blasted, and that an ejection from the hotel would inevitably ensue. The picture he painted of his disastrous condition, the solemn asseverations he made respecting remittances from England, the touching assurances of his intense regard for myself, and the irresistible force of his appeal to my generosity, can only be conceived by one who is, or was, acquainted with this remarkable person."

"And you gave him the money?" asked Wharton, laughing.

"And I gave him the money, sir: which from that day to this I need not tell you I have never seen the colour of again. Nearly six months now elapsed (I spent the interval with a pupil at Spa) before I again set eyes upon my friend. One afternoon I chanced to be sipping my coffee in company with an acquaintance, when Mom-

brun entered the Kurgarten and walked close by us. I saw that he observed me ; but he speedily turned his head in the opposite direction.

“ ‘ You see that man,’ said my companion, ‘ he avoids me, because some time back I lent him ten thalers, which he has never yet repaid.’

“ ‘ By heaven !’ said I, ‘ he avoids me for a very similar reason. What,’ I inquired, ‘ do you know of him ? And how came you to lend him money ?’ My friend, who had stayed at the hotel where Mombrun had lived, informed me that, like myself, he had been captivated with that gentleman’s address, and had paid for the pleasure pretty much after the same fashion as I had. ‘ But,’ said he, ‘ I soon began to suspect that I had been his dupe, and set myself to watch the fellow’s behaviour towards others ; fully resolved to expose his rascality, if his conduct should deserve

that name. In a short time I discovered that he was paying his court to the landlord's daughter, who gave him plenty of encouragement, and evidently reciprocated his attachment with sincerity and warmth. Mr. Zuckertort was fully aware of the state of his daughter's heart; and being impressed with a deep respect for Mombrun's distinguished position in English society, did not hesitate to favour the prospect of a marriage. It is not to be supposed that under these circumstances the courteous landlord would venture to incommode his future noble son-in-law (through whom he counted on an introduction to the highest circles in London) with the vulgar charges for accommodation. For several months therefore Mr. Mombrun enjoyed all the luxuries which Mr. Zuckertort and his family were able to provide. Even I,' said my companion, 'began to think the

affair would end respectably. 'The greater was my surprise when I suddenly discovered that our hero was making desperate advances to the Frau Gastwirthin herself: and so fascinating did he prove, that the fair lady seemed even more amorous and more pliant than her daughter. Scarcely an evening passed but the fond pair met, as though by accident, in the shady bowers of madam's private garden; and the matter was assuming so obtrusive an aspect that the notion of putting Zuckertort on his guard suggested itself seriously to my conscience. I was however saved this trouble. The unhappy husband made the discovery for himself: a violent explosion immediately ensued, and Mombrun, unable to pay a farthing in the pound, was clapt into jail under sentence of detention until his debts were paid.'

“I asked how long he had been at liberty; and what could induce him to remain where he was so well known and so little trusted.

“‘As to his liberty,’ replied my friend, ‘it is but two days since he got out of prison. Goodness knows how long he might have stayed there if his prosecutor had not applied for his release. The law here is, that the creditor provide for the sustenance of his debtor (on prison fare, of course) so long as the former thinks proper to keep the unpaying offender incarcerated. Now, as there was no hope of payment in this case, but, on the contrary, nothing but increased loss, Mr. Zuckertort, being naturally a phlegmatic person, wisely suppressed his vengeance, and saved his pocket. But I must tell you the regulation fees were by no means the only costs to which the honest landlord was sub-

jected. Strange to say, Fraulein Zuckertort insisted on the poor sufferer being supplied with proper nourishment from the hotel: answering her indignant father's remonstrances with well-feigned symptoms of hysteria and decline. Nor was the Frau mamma behindhand with her proofs of constancy. The daily basket sent to the prisoner's cell was lined by the careful ladies with dainties from the table d'hôte, and a bottle of excellent wine to cheer the culprit's disconsolate heart. But so contentedly did the latter bear his treatment, that when Zuckertort refused to keep him any longer shut up, Mombrun assured the authorities he saw no prospect of his paying, and advised them strongly to detain him where he was. These worthies naturally declined to keep the gentleman at their own expense. The consequence is, as you see, he is again at liberty; and is doubt-

less looking about at this minute in search of a fresh and fatuous pigeon.' ”

Wharton laughed heartily at Mr. Spilman's account of Mombrun's adventures. They were just what might have happened now, so far, at least, as the respectability of them was concerned. Alas ! the day had gone by (however still willing in spirit) when this Lothario could support himself by the fascination of his personal charms. Though Wharton little knew how much the old reprobate's present subsistence owed to the unchanging admiration of Miss Mumford ; still less did he dream that the man whose backslidings afforded him such entertainment was no other than his own father : a father, too, it must be confessed, who, with all his faults, possessed a tender heart, and loved this very son more dearly than himself.

## CHAPTER VIII.

WHILE Wharton was thus occupying his time between business and amusement, when winter passed away, and spring was advancing, and summer coming on, matters were ripening with the year amongst those upon whose conduct the young man's destiny depended.

At Tinselby the marquis was clutching at every opportunity to aggravate poor Daisy's sorrows by the utterance of his own. If hopeless love be the most gnawing, the most corrosive, of all cares, how immeasurably is its virulence heightened by the venomous sting of a guilty



conscience. Could Daisy have returned the young man's love with honesty, it would not have signified what obstacles stood between them; she would have hugged and caressed her passion with supreme internal bliss through all the most desperate phases of his difficulties. As it was, she had to suffer without hope, without consolation. If for a moment she permitted her fancy to revel in the paradise which Northern's image soon conjured up, she speedily became aware of the "wily adder" coiled amid the sweet flowers, waiting with "hellish rancour imminent" to despoil her of innocence and peace for ever. To no friend could she resort for comfort or advice. Such love as hers must either be concealed or quelled. Every woman would condemn her as unmercifully as she—Daisy—condemned herself. To a man it was impossible to speak. In

moments of weakness she did think of taking Evans into confidence, and treating him as a father or confessor. Oh, that she could make confession! What if she should turn Catholic on purpose? But these notions vanished as quickly as they came. Evans was no priest, no father; and if he were, who on *earth* could bear her burden but herself. There was nothing for it but to conceal or conquer. Both were equally intolerable. To suffer as she suffered was dreadful. To look forward to absolute indifference was—worse.

And was Lord Northern's lot more enviable than Daisy's? Unless it be a comfort to endeavour to think right what one knows to be wrong, his state was more deplorable than hers. She struggled and prayed for herself and for him; she made repeated resolutions; and so far as they related to her outward actions (the throbbing


of her heart she could not control) she steadfastly adhered to them ; and received the reward which never fails such conduct. But he, poor lad, made no efforts of the kind. He clung to his passion with might and main ; tearing at his chains until they chafed and galled and maddened him. Not all the Ebelians and Perfectionists in the world ever invented more ingenious subterfuges for 'shedding a mild lustre over adultery' ; not all the French novelists ever found such pleas for 'hating your neighbour, and loving your neighbour's wife ;' no moralist ever inveighed more bitterly against the wicked prostitution of bartering love for rank. It was no vulgar carnal love, look you, that filled *his* immaculate heart. Love eternal was what *he* yearned for—spiritual union, marriage, such only as heaven could sanction—a covenant between soul and soul ! Was she not

his by priority of choice ? by the sacred innocence of her first affection ? by the unspoken pledges which had passed between them a thousand times before she had been duped by falsehood and hypocrisy ? Why should that old Pharisee be respected ? He—the assassin of their happiness, the profligate corrupter of innocence, who had never harboured a thought beyond the indulgence of his own infernal lust ! . . . .

Was it not enough to drive him mad ? When he knew too that she loved him. She had never confessed it ? No, not in so many words. But what need of words ? Had she ever denied it ? No, because she would not lie ; because she knew he would not and could not believe her if she did deny it. Too late indeed ! were those her words ? Never ! Let them fly to the farthest corners of the earth ! Let them live by the labour of their own

hands: in the wilderness: in the primeval forests—  
away from the accursed conventionalities of society.  
Together and alone! And so on; and so on.

Notwithstanding these exquisite visions of heaven, the unhappy young man's present state much more closely resembled what is generally supposed to belong to another place? What availed it to rave in this way, and exculpate himself by reviling old De Crecy? Do you think he succeeded in blinding himself to his own treachery? Do you suppose his pride did not drag him through the mud when he reflected that his unvarnished purpose was to seduce the wife of one whose salt he was daily eating? whose hand he was daily grasping in token of friendship, or at least of honesty and straightforwardness? Mind you, Lord Northern had the making of a gentleman in him: in his lucid intervals he



scorned a dirty action with ineffable disdain ; fearing the loss of his self-respect more than he feared either death or the devil. Do you think then that he did not cringe when he remembered his own duplicity ? I know there are plenty of men who are case-hardened, who laugh at qualms of this kind, who go systematically to work with their seductions—scientifically to work, bringing all their former experiences and carefully stored knowledge to bear on the poor undefended little fortresses, that have no chance against such practised engineers. But even such accomplished scoundrels as these (or some of them, I suppose) had a conscience once ; nay, perhaps, feel remorse even now, when burning tears and broken hearts remind them of the ruin they took such pains to work. But Northern is young at the business of brutality as yet. Besides he has stuff in him that

will always save him from confirmed villany ; and at this very time he is miserable, not solely because Daisy de Crecy is invincible, but because in his heart of hearts he feels that he is behaving like a scoundrel. It is the underhand part of the business that shames him. He has to watch his opportunities, to waylay her on the staircases and in the passages, to seek her when alone in the drawing-room or library, to follow her stealthily to the pleasure-ground. And every success in these attempts is attained fraudulently, in a mean, sneaking way, which his better nature rebels against and hates. If De Crecy were but youthful like himself, and could meet him as met the knights of old, what more would he ask than to fight him to the death ? He would fight with him like any lion or wild bull, let us say, animated by a passion for "spiritual union."

It is evident this state of things could not last for ever. There are Fākirs who mangle and lacerate themselves with pleasure for the sake of idols which neither hear, nor see, nor feel: of the female sex there are millions. But Northern's fiery nature could not brook protracted suffering. A crisis of some sort was inevitable. He was rushing blindfold onwards like a horse that has lost his rider; but whether he would knock his brains out against the wall of difficulty, or dash himself to pieces over the precipice of possession, was equally puzzling to foretell, or hinder.

These were fearful days for the unhappy Daisy. She had to avoid and pacify and control Lord Northern. She had to deal also with her husband, whose jealousy and temper grew more violent from day to day. Frightful were the scenes which passed between them in private. Shameful



were the charges he brought against her. Awful was the language in which those charges were expressed. In vain Lady de Crecy protested her innocence. In vain she implored her husband to forbid the offender his house: the wretched man had not moral courage enough to turn a guilty servant off; much less the future Duke of Midland, whom he feared almost as much as he disliked. He abused her in terms she had never heard before,—in terms she scarcely understood, so foul and infamous was their import. At such times her indignation would overcome her powers of endurance and self-restraint; and she would hurl against the infuriated and pitiful old man her never-failing thunder-bolt—the threat of instant separation. Then followed grovelling contrition, drivelling protestations of impotent love, clutchings of reluctant hands, bended knees, senile and

infirm stoopings to kiss the pretty stamping feet, and all manner of exhibitions ludicrous in some measure, but sickening in reality, and full of sorrow.

The reconciliations which followed these outbreaks, if reconciliations they could be called, were not lasting in effect. Northern's hatred of pretence led him to behave almost defiantly in the face of Lord De Crecy. In fact, it was only on Daisy's account that he forced himself to observe anything like restraint. Every hour almost some fresh cause provoked the jealous husband's suspicions. As always happens in similar cases, he wronged his wife a thousand times a day with false and groundless imputations. Every movement of hers conveyed to his festering mind some meditated infidelity. Every time she put pen to paper, it was to her lover that she was writing a

*billet doux*. Every note she opened was an assignation. Sometimes he would directly question her. At others he would watch and pry in secret. Frequently he would open her doors with noiseless caution and enter suddenly, thinking to surprise her guilt.

One day as he did this, Daisy was sitting alone upon her sofa. The instant the door opened she thrust what she was reading under the cushion. Despite her quickness, Lord De Crecy saw the movement. A fiendish expression cramped his pale and withered features. But he was more courteous than usual. Daisy hoped her husband had not observed her hiding. His lordship spoke about their guests, proposed a drive in the open carriage, asked her whether she had seen the papers. And on her replying that she had not been in the library, where they were placed, he

prayed her, "by the way," to go and fetch the "Chronicle," which contained a paragraph that he desired to show her.

She left the room, thinking as she went, "He did not see it. I would not for worlds have had him see it." She hastened on her errand. But Lord de Crecy had ample time for inspection. As the famished tiger springs upon his prey, the vengeance-thirsting old man craving proof, quivering with rage and anticipated discovery, darts frantically at his prize. Dashing the cushion to the floor he seizes—what? A letter from Lord Northern? A lock of lover's hair? A copy of amorous verses? No! my Lord de Crecy, your lordship's wife neither seeks nor finds her secret consolation in such sweet but poisonous stimulants. Look well at what you hold! and if your trembling hands permit your dizzy eyes to read, turn,

I beseech you, to those tear-blistered pages ; perchance the very passage your wronged and angel wife was reading may touch, and, touching, heal your leprous soul : " Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

It was the Bible he had captured. The wretch was almost paralyzed.

## CHAPTER IX.

SUCH an incident, one would think, must stamp some impression, however faint, upon a mind not altogether deprived of reason. But presently I shall have to show how soon it was effaced from Lord de Crecy's memory. Meantime, conceive how intolerably irksome it was, under this pressure of affliction, to be compelled perpetually to masquerade it amid the frivolous obligations of gay and humdrum company. Yet, as every private establishment has its skeleton-cupboard, so in every festive congregation, Melpomene is present, disguised in Thalia's visor.

It is hard to say to which of them the burden of etiquette was most oppressive; whether to Northern, who, although he could command more freedom, had nothing to divert him; or to Lord and Lady de Crecy, who, unable to escape from their guests, were nevertheless kept by their duties from the pangs of solitary meditation.

A looker-on, like Evans, who sat comfortably in his stall while the play was being acted, must have been highly entertained by many of the scenes of this little comedy. Quietly observing all that passed, he could see how the principal actors were performing their difficult parts; and also notice, with amusement, the incidental business of the subordinates. What a medley of the laughable and the serious was assembled in that small domestic circle! There was Mrs. Seabright, thoroughly satisfied with the constant proximity

of her daughter to the object of her ambitions ; seeing only what she desired to see, cackling in the gentle duchess' willing ear, and persuading that kind lady, and herself too, that *it* was all going on as well as they could wish ; “ which, considering the dangers that beset a young man like the marquis (not to say, as all young men were better married), was fortunate enough : for the dears would make the handsomest and happiest couple in Great Britain. It was a blessing too that Helen was not extravagant ; his lordship being a little inclined that way would not matter so much, seeing her daughter had been so carefully brought up. And this was all her doing. Had Helen's education been left to Mr. Seabright, there was no saying what might have come of it : for in all her born days she never see a man so thoughtless about money as her John. He didn't



know what money was no more 'an the babe unborn. Why, bless her ! (the duchess) she (Mrs. S.) had found the dear cretur' hunting the other day for half-a-crown in a drawer full of sixpences and shillings. And laws ! if Helen had a mind to it, he wouldn't care what she spent, not he. Why, who'd believe it ; when them two dears was children, he used to put 'em in the corner for punishment ; and then because he couldn't a-bear to vex 'em, he'd give 'em sixpence a-piece to come out again. But they never wouldn't stir, bless 'em, under at least a shilling."

Then there was his grace, as calm and cheerful in the storm as could be. He loved his son and Daisy too ; but he had seen so many fierce passions burn themselves out, and leave nothing but harmless ashes, that he looked upon his boy's distemper as a natural consequence of youth. How the

matter would end, he did not vex himself to speculate. At seventy-three we leave the future to those whom it may concern. Life is short, and the grave is always open. So he played backgammon with the parson, and took his duchess for her daily stroll, and occasionally took tea with little Sybil Finch.

This was the old man's chief delight; and it was an important ceremony, I warrant you. On these occasions Miss Sybil presided at a table about eighteen inches high; seated in a proportionable arm-chair at one end, while the duke sat on a footstool at the other. The tea things being the property of Miss Finch's doll, the whole set would have packed comfortably in his grace's waistcoat pocket. Throughout the ceremonial the strictest formality was observed, and when the banquet was concluded and madam's tiny hands and cheeks

were divested of bread and butter, the pair removed to the duke's own room, and there amused themselves delightfully.

The golden knick-knacks upon the dressing-table—relics, I suppose, of some fifty years ago—afforded our little maiden inexhaustible amusement. She would rub the soft shaving brush against her chubby cheeks, and seriously inquire whether she would have a beard when she was as old as the Duke of Midland. To which her friend replied, that many an old woman had a bigger beard than his. The number of toys concealed amongst the duke's coats and linen was remarkable. Whenever Miss Sybil visited him, she went a-hunting in his wardrobe; and if her visit was expected, you may be sure she never drew it blank. It was indeed amusing to see them both while this sport was going on. The old man's face beamed with tender-

ness and fun as he watched the little nymph stealing on tiptoe towards the chest of drawers, and mysteriously whispering (so as not to let the toys know that she was coming), "I wonder what the fairies have hidden here to-day." It was always the fairies who had put the toys there; and the fairies were great favourites in consequence. The little maiden was never tired of hearing tales about them, and as the old gentleman's imagination was somewhat past its prime, and his memory impaired by seventy years neglect of this department of literature, he was sadly puzzled to satisfy the insatiable demand for it. Miss Sybil moreover never forgot the smallest detail in any story she had once heard. The adventures of Messrs. Avenant, and Leander, and Riquet, and King Pippin, were historical truths which were not to be tampered with. So that whenever the narrator surrep-

titiously or inadvertently borrowed an incident from the Arabian Nights, which belonged to the Yellow Dwarf or the Invisible Prince, he was severely reprimanded by the little critic, and convicted of base imposture.

Mr. Evans came in for a share of these entertainments, partly in consequence of these grave defaults. He was a far better hand at an impromptu than the duke; and as he thoroughly enjoyed the society of this inseparable couple, he was always ready to succour his embarrassed friend; who, I really believe, listened to his stories with nearly as much interest as did the child.

But this quiet and shrewd observer, who thus amused himself with the peculiarities of those around him, was especially diverted by the pomposity and affected gaiety of the unlucky man whom he knew to be writhing all the while with

the sharpest torments. Lord de Crecy's feeble essays at literary conversation with him, Evans; his farming talk, in which he displayed almost equal ignorance, with the duke; his views on education, as delivered to Mr. Seabright; his statistics with Mr. Terrier; his gossip and scandal with Froth (wherein alone he was at home); were subjects of constant mirth to our jocose observer. The old goose's vanity was ever uppermost in spite of his incessant anguish. Nothing would satisfy him but he must play the part of an accomplished and handsome fascinator. It was wonderful to see him bending over the fair shoulders of Miss Helen, curling his waxed mustaches, and fancying that Lord St. Kitts and Percy Froth and the rest of the young men were biting their nails in envy of him. Heavens! what vapid nonsense he whispered in her ears; and how boisterously he

laughed at his own facetious wit. Then see him at the piano turning over the leaves for the warbling little widow. He hates music, it is worse than mere noise to him, it irritates his fretted nerves, and upsets his jaundiced liver ; yet his gestures are full of rapture. "How charming, ah ! how lovely ! what is that last song ? (trying to read the title), 'O Côme, tôme ;' yes, yes, of course ! I thought I recognized it ; there's nothing so lovely as Italian music. Do sing it once more." And the jolly Miss Lanyard, who catches Mr. Evans' eye, stuffs her pocket-handkerchief into her mouth, while the meek little vocalist repeats that familiar melody, "O come to me when daylight sets." But his lordship never discovers his mistake, for he is glaring now at the unfortunate Daisy, by whose side Lord Northern has taken a seat.

Evans' panoramic view includes all these in-

teresting details; nor did he overlook the performances of that admirable comedian, Mr. Terrier. There was something about this luckless wight that Evans could not help liking; although here too he had his quiet laugh. In spite of Terrier's readiness, his anxiety rather, to quarrel with his neighbours, there was not a more generous tempered fellow breathing. Ever on the look out for an insult, he walked the world, as it were, without a skin, and with a pistol in each hand. Quixotically chivalrous in all his notions, he could not understand the latitude others gave themselves, and regarded the absence of punctilio as a want of friendliness or good breeding. Essentially humble-minded and modest in the main, he was remarkably sensitive upon two points—his pedigree, and his personal appearance. The fact is, he had terrible misgivings about both. When-



ever, therefore, reference was made by accident to either of these subjects, no matter how remote people's thoughts were from him, he instantly applied the comments to himself; and assumed an intention on the speaker's part to ridicule and wound his feelings. These habits often led him to resent insults which had not been offered: but when convinced of his mistake, he suffered intense confusion: and would express, in unmeasured terms, the abject sense of his own folly, and exhibit besides the warmest attachment to the individual whom the minute before he had longed to throttle. His devotion to the fair sex—the young and beautiful, that is—was both passionate and indiscriminate, and the raw places in his temper helped to stimulate his susceptibility. The competition of such men as Sir Percy and Lord St. Kitts, obliged him to convince himself that he

was in nowise their inferior. It was absolutely necessary to his self-respect (which it would have been death to him to forfeit) to obtain from the objects of their admiration some proofs of his own irresistibility. Did they swagger in his presence; did they pay court to Miss Lanyard, or Miss Helen; he would swagger and make love with the biggest "swell" amongst them; and if they gave him any airs, he would challenge them, by Jove! and send a bullet through their heads as often as they pleased!

Taking into account Sir Percy Froth's demeanour to this irritable gentleman, we may easily conceive how the two were always on the verge of quarrelling. It will be remembered that a rupture did nearly happen at the servants' ball at Tramways. Mr. Terrier had then resolved to take the colonel's life next morning. The colonel, however,

had apologized. But since then Sir Percy had indemnified himself by repeated provocations. Terrier was more or less a physical obstacle to his *tête-a-têtes* with Helen. Froth was therefore as anxious to give offence as the other was to take it. While they were both in this warlike frame of mind an incident occurred, which is recorded in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER X.

WHENEVER it could be managed without detriment to the conviviality of others, to which the Duke of Midland ever made his actions subservient, a whist-table was got up for the old nobleman's special pleasure. Generally speaking, the elders joined him ; and amongst them Mr. Seabright. This night, however, Mrs. Lanyard had engaged the parson in a game of chess ; and the four who sat down to play were the Duke, Sir Percy Froth, the Admiral, and Mr. Terrier. On cutting for partners it fell out that the two enemies were drawn together as allies.

Now the admiral was fond of speculation : and

confident in his partner's skill, he challenged Froth to play for "pounds and fivers." The colonel was by no means eager to accept these stakes: but trusting to his luck, which might possibly not suffer from the shortsightedness of his opponents, he hesitated at first, but finally agreed. Mr. Terrier, be it known, was not a first-rate player. To be sure, he did his best to remember what was out. He arranged and rearranged his hand, turned this card up and that card down; but after a round or two was played these aids did not avail him. One game grew complicated with another, till at last his memory was reduced to inextricable confusion. This state of Terrier's faculties was not improved by Froth's acknowledgment of his endeavours. Now an appeal to the ceiling, accompanied by a groan; now a "Good Heavens!" of astonishment, which con-

veyed ineffable disgust. But a blow on the head with a cudgel would have served as well to clear poor Terrier's brains. Besides these distractions, the admiral, *per contra*, was in the highest spirits; and did not mend the condition of his adversaries by his own incessant jabber. While the game was going on, he gave the duke a description of a new company just formed for converting conger eels into turtle; and of another (by which he hoped to make a fortune) for picking oakum by machinery. From this he got to corporal punishment; and informed Sir Percy Froth that when he was captain of the "John Dory" he used to flog his crew in regular rotation. But notwithstanding the unsuitableness of these remarks, they did not divert his own attention from the game and when, after winning almost every point, the inevitable revoke at last was made, the wary

sailor at once detected it; calling at the same time, "Two trebles and the rub."

"Yes," says Sir Percy Froth, with wonderful *sang-froid*, "'tis not easy to win with three men playing against you; though (this he added as if reflecting to himself) one of them should happen to be the d—dest fool alive."

"Sir," exclaims Mr. Terrier, jumping up as red as the ace of hearts, "did you intend to apply that epithet to me?"

"I certainly did not intend it for the Duke of Midland, nor for Admiral Lanyard."

"Then I am to understand that it was meant for me," rejoins Terrier, half suffocated with the effort to imitate Froth's coolness.

"You may understand what you please," drawls Sir Percy. "It was meant for no one to whom it was not applicable."

“Then, sir, give me leave to tell you that you are——”

“Hush, hush ! Terrier,” says the duke, laying his hand goodnatureedly on his agent’s arm, “not in the drawing-room, my friend. Besides, you hear what Froth says, the offensive word was not meant for any one to whom it was not appropriate. You don’t mean to say that you are—eh ? Ha ! ha ! why you silly fellow ! There, look there (the duke whispers), Miss Nelly wants a candle; Froth will get it for her, if you do not look sharp.”

Lady de Crecy had observed the disturbance, and, it being rather late, she caused a general move with a view to stop the quarrel. For the time, the withdrawing of the ladies had the desired effect. Sir Percy took no more notice of his angry partner, but hastened to provide Miss Seabright with a light, and mutter a few tender



words as she went away. As Lady de Crecy wished the gentlemen good-night, she anxiously noticed the looks of the two foes: and the white or rather yellow hue of Mr. Terrier's complexion convinced her that he, for one, was only waiting till she was gone to renew the quarrel. Bold as a true heroine where moral courage was required, she had a thoroughly feminine terror of war and carnage. When therefore she reached her room she turned over a dozen schemes for reconciling the belligerents, and averting the catastrophe which she so much feared. She had half a mind to seek her husband, and bid him see to the keeping of the peace. But there were two objections to this project. In the first place, it would be next to impossible to induce him to interfere in other people's feuds. In the second, Lord de Crecy had that very evening given fresh instances

of his own ire ; and had behaved in such a manner as to cause apprehension of one of those dreadful outbreaks which she, poor creature, was always labouring to avoid. Under these circumstances there was no speaking to *him* ; and for the same reason, no communicating with Lord Northern. She hoped, however, that the duke would not leave Froth and Terrier alone ; and thought perhaps his Grace might get Mr. Seabright or Mr. Evans to help in setting matters straight. Still, however, she felt so uneasy that she postponed the services of her maid ; and, dressed as she was, determined to descend the back stairs, (so as not to meet the gentlemen going to bed) and listen in the library to what was going on.

Lady de Crecy's anticipations were not long in being verified. Directly the majority of the

gentlemen, including the host, retired, Mr. Terrier strode up to the baronet, and said, "Sir Percy Froth, you this night used language to me, which, as a gentleman and a man of honour, I cannot suffer to pass unnoticed. Your insult was given in public, I therefore demand a public apology."

"Public!" sneers the colonel, "what the —— does the —— fool mean by public? I suppose he thinks he is in a public-house. To judge by his manners, one would suppose he had never been out of one."

"If that is your opinion," cries Mr. Terrier, "take that, and that," and first with the right hand, then with the left, the exasperated agent fetched the baronet a swinging box on each side of his face.

Lord Northern and Mr. Evans both witnessed this rapid act; but before either of them had time

to interfere, Froth, now quivering with rage, snatched up a Turkish dagger which lay beside him on a table of curiosities, and rushed at Terrier with the intention, probably, of only wounding him. A formidable scuffle now ensued, in which, never since the days of Hector and Achilles, were two combatants animated with more deadly hate. Whatever might have been the armed man's purpose, the violence of the struggle made the ugly blade almost equally dangerous to both, and any attempt to part them might have been as perilous as shooting at a tiger while carrying off a friend. Locked in each other's embraces, and wrestling for the fall, it seemed as if the flashing steel must presently be buried in the side of one of them. Rolling on the floor, now Froth is uppermost ; but Terrier extricates himself and the baronet is beneath

him. The agent knows full well the danger of letting go Sir Percy's arm : throughout the duel, therefore, he clings to his foe's wrist with strength proportioned to his fear. The knife, in fact, is the focus of their energies ; until that is free, not much harm can come to either ; the moment that is released, who can tell how fearful the injury may be ?

Evans and Northern both stood ready to act ; but the horrible weapon, which flashed everywhere at once, still kept them at a distance. The admiral, who was the only other person present, had seized the poker (heaven knows with what intent), and danced around the combatants, shouting first to one then to the other, as though he were conducting an engagement between two frigates in a gale of wind. At last Froth succeeds in bending back one of the fingers which grasp

his wrist; the others are soon detached; he snatches away the blade, and a yell of pain from Terrier proclaims that he is wounded. Northern instantly clutched the baronet's uplifted arm; and Evans, throwing himself upon Froth's shoulders, forced his head aside, and liberated the bleeding gladiator.

It appears that when the dagger was drawn away, Terrier had made an effort to recover his grasp. In so doing he had caught the blade, and had received a gash in the hand which nearly severed the index and middle fingers. The hemorrhage was profuse. The hand itself was covered with blood, which trickled on to the carpet. The wounded man felt himself to be severely hurt. Possibly an unpleasant vision of lock-jaw flitted through his mind. He looked at Froth, who might well be ashamed at the mischief he had

done, and said with every trace of anger removed from his voice and manner, "It was not right, sir, to attack me like an assassin."

"I'm sorry you're hurt," returned the baronet, curtly, "but it was your own fault, you struck the first blow."

"Come, come," said Evans, "we have had quarrelling enough for to-night. An insult has been given and an injury returned, whatever belongs to that score is wiped out. But it is rather a strong measure to attack an unarmed man with a dagger; and I think, Sir Percy, looking at the consequences, you can well afford to beg Mr. Terrier's pardon."

"Oh well," says Froth, with a shrug of the shoulders, "if you think so, I'm agreeable. Mr. Terrier, I beg your pardon, and hope you'll be none the worse for the cut."

“As to the cut,” says Terrier, who now was all forgiveness and generosity, “I dare say it’s nothing very serious, and since you beg my pardon, Sir Percy, I am quite ready to beg yours. I know I am apt to be hasty, but I hope you will bear no malice. I’m very sorry that I struck you. I can’t offer you my right hand, but if you’ll take my left, there it is, and all I can say is may we never be worse friends.”

“Spoken like a man by——!” roars the admiral, striking what he called his ‘salamander’ on the floor. “Come, Froth, my hearty, bear up, and give him your fin.”

As soon as the colonel had shaken hands, which he did with the best grace he could, Admiral Lanyard mixed a stiff glass of grog, and insisted on Terrier swallowing it all boiling as it was. The poor fellow being faint from



loss of blood, no better treatment could have been devised.

While the latter part of this battle was being fought, Lady de Crecy was in the next room, listening with breathless eagerness to the scuffling of the combatants and the vociferations of the excited admiral. She had not reached the library until the conflict was nearly over, and while she was making up her mind to go in and put a stop to it, the noise, which was very indistinct through the double doors, terminated with Terrier's yell, and gradually died away altogether. This silence, combined with her ignorance, heightened her anxiety to the most painful pitch. She waited and waited, straining her senses to catch some sound that would inform her of what was going on. At last, unable to control her curiosity any longer, she turned the handle of the inner door, when the door

of the drawing-room was also opened, and Lord Northern stood before her. "You here!" said he, starting back as if he beheld an apparition.

"Yes," she answered, hastily. "Tell me what has happened. I heard—good God! you are bleeding, Northern," and in her terror she seized his hand.

"No," said he, much gratified by this spontaneous burst of feeling, "this blood is not mine, it is Terrier's. He has been hurt. A cut in the hand, nothing serious, I hope. They've sent for a doctor. Froth and he have had a row."

"I know," said she, "but tell me all about it. What happened when the women left the room? How was he wounded? Did Froth stab him? How did you get blooded?" and Lady de Crecy sank through faintness on a sofa. The marquis then flung himself beside her, and told her, perhaps

not as briefly as he might, how the quarrel had commenced; how Froth was always aggravating Terrier; how he wished Terrier had given Froth a thrashing; how dangerous the struggle was; what difficulty he and Evans had in separating them; and doubtless he would have told her a good deal more, had not Lady de Crecy stopped him by rising to go away.

“I am glad,” she said, with slight embarrassment, “that you are none the worse. I thought, when first I saw you, those dreadful stains looked ominous.”

“If,” said he, retaining her hand in his; “if my blood, dear Daisy, could purchase such another expression of your interest I would gladly shed it all.”

She tried to withdraw her hand; but he held it fast, and bowed his head to kiss it. At this

very crisis, ere his lips had touched that but half-resisting hand, a side door was slowly and noiselessly pushed open. Lady de Crecy saw it. Her start and exclamation arrested Lord Northern's movement. He had just time to recover himself, when Lord de Crecy glided in; and stood there like a spectre, ghastly, motionless, and silent.

It is not difficult to imagine what the unhappy husband expected to discover. He had watched his wife's movements from the moment she left the drawing-room. His mind was not occupied with the quarrels of the whist-table. It was rankling with his own suspicions. If there was any thought of spilling blood, it was neither Froth's nor Terrier's. But let us go back and follow him.

Scarcely were the ladies lodged safely in their chambers, when the anxious Daisy stole cautiously

from hers. And now, as she issues from her room, she looks carefully down the passage. She, of course, has no idea that she is being watched. She sees no one; for her husband is concealed; and he draws back exactly as she emerges. At first she hesitates which direction she shall take. But afraid of meeting some one upon the principal stairs, she decides upon the other. On her way to it, she has to pass by Northern's room. She wonders whether he is gone to bed. That cannot be, for his door stands wide open. A sudden curiosity takes possession of her: curiosity to peep into the room which she had bestowed such pains in decorating. How does it look now that *he* inhabits it?

The door opened inwards, so that Lord De Crecy, who is some way down the passage, cannot see that it is open at all; and therefore cannot know

that the room itself is empty. Now, it is only a peep that Daisy takes. She does not enter; but stands for a second or two looking in. Fatal curiosity! The instant his wife is out of sight, and, as he imagines, in Northern's arms, he darts from his concealment, rushes to his own room, and shaking from head to foot, with haste, shaking with emotions more violent than haste, almost incapacitated by agitation, he unlocks a bureau as fast as his cold clammy quivering hands allow him, tears open a drawer, and seizes upon a brace of small pistols. One of these he slips into each coat pocket. He then rushes to the scene of his supposed dishonour and shame.

The birds are flown, the door is still wide open. No candles are burning; but the fire blazes fitfully. He scans the furniture with a cunning eye—the bed, the sofa. But everything is orderly.

Nothing moves. No sound is audible. Whither are they gone? He pauses in an agony of suspense. Then off to Daisy's bedchamber. They are not there. To her boudoir. No, nor there. He listens on the staircase; and hears nothing but the measured ticking of the old hall clock. Now voices reach him: and now a cry of pain. Bah! 'Tis only Froth and Terrier fighting. And in despair he dashes back to search some rooms unoccupied.

At last it strikes him there is a chance of finding them in the library. . . . His ear is at the key-hole. Yes, that is Daisy's voice. Hark! What is it she says? "When first you hm—hm." And now 'tis Northern's. "If my blood, *dear* Daisy——" Here he entered; and what was then revealed? Lady de Crecy stood a full yard or more apart from Northern. And the marquis

stood with his hands in his pockets, looking as composed as fierce defiance would allow him. Lord De Crecy took in their relative attitudes at a glance. Beyond the lateness of the hour, and the fact that they had previously parted for the night, there was nothing to lay hold of. Yet the husband had, with his own eyes, seen his wife enter at midnight into the chamber of her lover. Of this Lady de Crecy knew nothing. So her whole demeanour expressed, and was intended to express, anger and indignation at this last fresh instance of unwarranted suspicion. Lord De Crecy remained stationary. Daisy turned to Northern, gave him her hand, thanked him for his exertions in the quarrel, begged him to order whatever was required for the wounded man, then bade him good-night, and closed the door behind her. The next moment Northern heard a scream.



Dashing into the passage he found Lady de Crecy, her face covered by her hands, with her back against the wall as close as she could get. Lord de Crecy was holding a pistol to her head. Like lightning, a blow from the young man's hand sent the pistol spinning along the floor, and a simultaneous push sent the weapon's owner after it. Daisy's life no longer threatened, her nerve was soon regained. She put aside the support which Northern offered ; and hastened from the spot without further word or look. Lord de Crecy and Lord Northern were now left face to face.

“ You perhaps imagine,” began the elder, “that you have saved Lady de Crecy's life ? ”

“ Well, I was about as near to that as I was to taking yours, I suppose. If I had failed in one, I should have fallen back upon the other.”

“A case of Tell and Gesler. Yet I was but proving to her that I had spared your life and hers too.”

“I am infinitely obliged to you. And, considering your gentle mode of illustration, have no doubt that Lady de Crecy is the same.”

“See here,” the speaker drew the second pistol from his pocket, “I had one for each of you; yet refrained from using either.”

“It was considerate of you; especially in regard to your own neck. But your intention to have a shot at *me* shall certainly not be balked.”

With this Lord Northern walked away; and as he passed Lord de Crecy he clenched his fist, hoping yet for an excuse to annihilate his foe.

“Very good,” said Lord de Crecy, “we will settle that to-morrow.” He then picked up the fallen weapon, and marched sulkily to his den.

## CHAPTER XI.

WHEN Daisy reached her room she locked herself in, threw herself on her bed, and endeavoured to collect her bewildered thoughts. Any attempt to portray the rapid succession of ideas that filled and confused her mind would be a failure. It is said by persons who have survived the perils of death, that in the imminent moment of destruction all the marked events of life are crowded into that awful crisis. Something of a similar character was the mental phasis past through by Lady de Crecy. Her life had been threatened, and, had it been taken, her last mo-

ments could not have been more terrible than those which she had undergone. And now, as she lay upon her bed, she seemed to live through that catastrophe again. And the violent stimulus of fear and horror excited consciousness to such a pitch, that her whole life appeared vividly present to her at once. Through all her efforts to compose herself her childhood and her girlhood, which seemed incalculably remote, kept rising up like phantoms, and mingling with her actual condition. It was a state of nightmare, in which she strove vainly to convert the present into the past—to make the past real, and the present but a dream. She kept on putting to herself such questions as these. Was the past so utterly irrevocable? Was she then absolutely married to Lord de Crecy? Had she taken a step from which there was no retreating? Was

Northern ever so profligate, so indifferent to her, as they accused him of being? Should she not relent? Should she not tell Lord de Crecy that she never could marry him? Confess that she had loved Northern from her childhood? would it not be better to tell him all, before it was too late?

Then half doubting whether she is dreaming or waking she timidly feels for her wedding ring. Finding the dreadful reality, she starts up as if a new idea had struck her; and asks aloud, why was it even now too late? That man, who put the pistol to her head, was not her husband. No, not in any sense her husband. Why should she not procure a divorce? Once free, she might honorably be Northern's wife—the wife of the man she loved. What bliss—what rapture was in the thought. Divorce—and what did that

entail? Hideous question! Law, public courts, cross-examinings, insulting counsel, the ribald crowd, the whispers and pointed fingers of society! No, no, never, never! Rather would she endure her present misery for ever, than face the torture of such annihilating shame. \* \* \* Yet how could she bear this life any longer? She had striven, and had done her best; but all to no purpose. She was innocent, yet suffered as much, nay, more than if she were guilty. And would it after all be guilt? What if Northern were in the right? What if flight with him were justifiable—pardonable in the eye of heaven? Ah! yes it must be so. Could Justice exact more from Virtue than she had already performed? Could mercy punish where love was the only crime? \* \* \* She would fly with Northern away from their incessant torturing trials—far, far away from every soul

who knew her, to be alone with him where each would be sufficient to the other. They would be married: and their children—their children would some day learn that their mother was—hush! dreadful thought! But she was innocent. Before God she was innocent! Heaven be blessed, she was innocent, and innocent she would remain.

Lady de Crecy paced the room to calm her agitation, and grasp her last resolve more firmly. By degrees her wonted strength and courage returned, and by degrees she began to think of others. What would be the sequel of this affair between Lord de Crecy and Lord Northern? With men such quarrels could only be settled by a duel. Lord de Crecy, as she remembered to have heard, had fought before, many years ago. How had that duel ended? Had he shot his adversary? She did not know. This time he might himself be killed,

and then—no, she could never marry the man who had taken her husband's life. But perhaps Northern might fall; and die for her sake. The quarrel was on her account. If either of them were killed she would be the murderess, she alone would be to blame. This must not, could not, be. It was her instant duty to prevent it: she must see Lord de Crecy forthwith; she must explain to him exactly what had happened. Her own feelings were nothing in the scale against the risk of human life. \* \* \* And Northern must leave the house to-morrow—not a single day might he remain. She would command him, implore him, on her knees she would implore him, to go: she would convince him that his presence brought nothing but misery, convince him that his passion was hopeless; that no persuasion, no suffering should ever induce her to give way. If all else failed, she



would confess her own love (entrancing thought!) and appeal to him by that. For her sake he would learn to be more patient. If he did but know how she suffered he could bear his own distress more patiently.

When, after this harassing conflict, she had quite decided upon the course to be taken, Lady de Crecy set herself to reflect on the best way of putting her plans into execution. She now remembered that the morrow had been fixed on for a grand battue in the park. Several of the neighbours had been invited. The duke was very keen about his day's sport. The end of the season was approaching: everything had been arranged and settled. It was impossible to postpone the day. Yet nothing could be more inopportune at such a moment as the present. In the first place, Lord de Crecy neither knew nor cared

anything about sport. He never crossed a horse except to canter in the park; and never fired a gun, because it gave him a headache. Whenever Northern was staying in the house (and he used always to be at Tinselby for the shooting) he had invariably taken the management of it entirely into his own hands. Now, the first consideration with Lord de Crecy was to keep up appearances—to make displays suitable to his own notions of his own importance. If he gave an entertainment in London, or in the country, it must be more brilliant than other people's entertainments. Any failure, any break-down or miscarriage, would be sure to bring on a fit of the gout. What then was to become of this battue if Northern were not to manage it? How under the circumstances could he possibly remain to do so? And yet the party could not be put off. The

people had been asked for weeks before. Supposing that Northern did stay in the house for one day more, what chance was there of his helping Lord de Crecy? Yet was not Lord de Crecy helpless (in this matter) without him? She knew nothing of these things herself, but she knew what a fuss Lord de Crecy was always in about his battues, and what a point he made of having some one like Northern to superintend them. What was to be done? She must devise something. What was she to do? She had no heart for anything. Yet everything would devolve on her. How should she get through it all? How should she attend to the people who were coming? She would have to drive some of the ladies to the shooters, and lunch with them. If Lord de Crecy remained at home (which he would probably do to avoid Northern) he would be thinking the

whole time that she was there on purpose to give Northern opportunities. On every side she was beset with troubles. But the greatest of all was the duel. That must be averted, whatever else might happen.

Lady de Crecy's task was even more burdensome than she deemed it. Usually, as we know after these domestic scenes Lord de Crecy's violence was followed by a reaction, which brought him humble and cringing to the feet of his injured wife. He had at last, so he imagined, just and terrible cause for wrath. The guilty Daisy had sought her paramour in his own chamber. Never therefore had Lord de Crecy been so miserable, so infuriated, so implacable, as now.

For some time Daisy waited in momentary expectation of the penitent's tap at her door. Then she began to be impatient. The night was far

advanced. What could Lord De Crecy be doing? Surely he would come and beg for pardon as usual. She waited, but he came not. There was no resource left but to go to him. But then (she reasoned), if she appeared as a supplicant, her humility might aggravate his suspicion. It would have simplified the affair so much to have him on his knees to start with. To condescend to raise him up was one thing, to have the task of humiliating him was another. However the importance of the issue admitted of no swerving. But stop! What if for once in his life his lordship should prove refractory? What if for this once the magic power of her charms should fail to conquer him? Lady de Crecy rings for Mistress Tucker, and straightway begins to perform, or (if you will) to unperform her toilet.

But no Angela's wicked part will we play. No

Porphyro by our consent shall peep through closet key-hole upon our peerless Madeline. The amorous imagination of youth must fain transport itself whither it listeth. But not on this chaste plume, plucked from the iron wing of Joseph Gillott, shall any lawless fancy ride. What? would you have us turn Jachimo, and help you to pry into the sacred *penetralia* of this sweet Imogen? What do I know of the golden cherubim upon the fretted roof; the winking cupids on the andirons, the Cleopatras on the silk and silver tapestry? The very atmosphere would make you faint with sweetness. Moss roses are out of bloom in January; yet there's something here of every flower's odour. But what flower so sweet as our Daisy? I dare say now, a vulgar eye (ye gods avert it!) would note you the endless instruments which minister to the sacred rites of beauty's

queen. The soft luxurious couches, the satin-quilted bed, the golden ornaments of the dressing-table, the caskets filled with sparkling gems, and how

The tortoise and the elephant unite,  
Transformed to combs, the speckled and the white.

The bath too, with its array of snowy towels, soft sponges, and Parisian soaps. And those tiny slippers waiting on the fleecy rug to kiss the naked little feet. But you, my stern misogynist, and I, are looking up the chimney all this while ; we would blush to play the spy, when

Of all its wreathed pearls her hair she frees ;  
Unclasps her warmed jewels one by one ;  
Loosens her fragrant boddice ;

and the law of gravitation asserts its customary influence over the rich attire, in which our Daisy lately looked so beautiful. When the priestess

Tucker is dismissed however, when our lovely lady's oversight has been redeemed, and those charms of which she doubted are rendered irresistible as art, or rather nature (for she has put off much more than she has put on) can make them; when decked in the simple white *pegnoir* trimmed with pink ribbons, her sumptuous tresses flowing lovelily over her shoulders, she prepares to conquer in the cause of Peace—then, I say, let us again behold, and admire. Before she goes forth on her righteous mission she kneels to Heaven for grace; and fervently invokes the strength she needs, and prays forgiveness for all those wicked, wicked thoughts which we have just now shared in.

Lord de Crecy sits ruminating before his fire. He starts at the gentle tap which rouses him. "Who's there?" he cries, half dreading per-



haps that a certain savage youth is come to wring his poor old shrivelled neck.

“Daisy.”

“Come in.”

He does not raise his head to look at her. Perhaps he dreads her loveliness—the loveliness lavished on another. For a minute or two neither breaks the silence.

“Well, what is it you want? what are you come here for?” he presently says, furtively glancing in her direction.

“Can you ask me,” said she, “after what has passed to-night? I have received many outrages at your hands, Lord de Crecy, and how often you have aspersed my honesty I know not. But to-night you have threatened to take my life.”

“It might have been better for both of us had I carried out the threat.”

“If the remainder of my life were to be what that life has some time been, it would indeed be better that I were dead.”

“Dead! why did you ever live? Why did I ever set eyes on you? What have I done that my existence should be cursed by a creature so beautiful to look on, so false—so foul as you?”

“Lord de Crecy, I came here to receive the amends which are my due, for the insult and violence which I may no longer bear with. Sometimes my bitter sense of wrong has goaded me to reject the atonements which in your contrition you have offered me. To-night your conduct has passed the measure of all former injuries. I demand the reparation which I hitherto disdained.”

She stood before him like an empress.

“What!” shrieked his lordship, “you demand reparation! you, you! ha, ha, ha! This is the

consummation of a strumpet's impudence. Why, were I but to swear in a court of law to what I this night witnessed, the most callous judge would blush to hear your infamy. His sentence would proclaim you to the world—an outcast!”

“ You lie! ’Tis false, I swear by Heaven, it is a shameful and most calumnious lie.”

“ Woman, I *saw* you. You thought you were unnoticed. You cast your guilty looks around you, but you could not see that I was watching. Concealed in the recess, I detected all your movements. Stealthily you crept along the passage, stealthily I crept after you. I guessed your purpose; by the way you went I knew you could have no other. When you reached *his* door you paused. Again you looked behind you. Your greedy haste to meet your lover prevented you from seeing me. I *saw you enter!* Will you

deny it? Will you swear these eyes, not you, deceived me? Ha! you turn pale: you faint! Daisy!"

"Thank you, I am well. It is nothing—the shock—the surprise—it is over now. So, so, you watched me, Lord de Crecy? And you saw me enter Lord Northern's room?"

"Would that I had been struck blind first?"

"Yes, you did see me."

"She confesses it!"

"And for this you would have murdered me! You must have suffered very much, to be driven by so slight an accident, to contemplate so grave a crime. Listen to me, Lord de Crecy, I will try to comfort you."

She took his hand. "You have wronged me very deeply, but the penalty you pay almost balances that wrong. No assurances of mine can quell the scorching fever of your jealousy;

time and your own endeavours only can work this cure; but I may be a patient nurse, and may sometimes, as now, I hope, assuage this frenzy with the balm of gentle words. Listen to me calmly, Lord de Crecy, I will explain to you what took place last night. Before I left the drawing-room I perceived that a quarrel was impending between Mr. Terrier and Sir Percy. I knew the hasty temper of one of them, and dreaded the spiteful malice of the other. Not being over well myself, a nervous apprehension seized me. A presentiment of bloodshed took so strong a hold of me that I was on the point of asking you to interfere. After the ladies had retired, so intolerable was my suspense that I determined to seek the library; and if I heard the disturbance going on, to return to the men and stop it. To be minute in accounting for my movements, I chose

the back staircase in order to avoid any gentlemen who might be coming up the main one. In passing Lord Northern's door I noticed that it stood open—wide open. I was glad it was so : for I learnt from this that he was not yet up ; and hoped his presence would combine with that of others' to terminate the brawl. An idle curiosity (I can call it nothing else) led me to glance into the room. As mistress of the house, and with my habits of personally arranging all the rooms, I am persuaded I should have felt the same inclination, and acted precisely in the same way, had I passed any open door at any other time. Your hideous suspicions are even now unaccountable to me. If you were watching, you must have seen I did not linger an instant there. I looked into the room it is true, and in order to do so passed I suppose out of your range of sight. But not

a second did I loiter there. I turned at once, and descended hastily to the library. The men were fighting when I got there. I heard other voices besides the two. I waited: the struggle did not last long. Presently, when all was over, Lord Northern entered, and found me listening. He told me of the quarrel: how Froth had used a knife: how Terrier had been wounded. What time he took in recounting the details you best can judge, for you were in the passage. When you found us, I was wishing him good-night. Do you believe me, Lord de Crecy?"

"O Daisy! forgive me this once, forgive me. I am a poor insane old fool. Mad, mad with love of you—my beautiful, my angel wife!" And the wretched man fell on his knees, and sobbed till the tears streamed through the burning hands in which his face was buried.

“Yes!” said his angel-wife, “I do forgive you this once; for this once, perhaps, you had some pretext, however slender, for those vile and slanderous suspicions which are making our lives a hell to us. But alas! what assurance can you give me that this miserable jealousy will not plunge us both into the same abyss of suffering to-morrow? When am I to be trusted? When am I to be spared these ruthless contumelies? When am I to be treated, if not with the respect due to your wife, at least with the common courtesy due to my gentle birth and to my sex?”

“Spare me, Daisy, spare me! never again, my darling, I solemnly swear, shall you have cause to reproach me with this infernal jealousy. If you did but know how I worship you; how the misery I inflict on you, and on myself (and God knows how much I suffer!) all comes of my inordinate



devotion. If you only knew how I adore you. Ah, don't withdraw this little hand. Do, do let me kiss it. This once forgive me, my angel; never I swear——” and *da capo*.

“It is not by such oaths that my peace can be ensured. Too often have I heard their repetition. I will not threaten you, Lord de Crecy, with the just penalty of your shameful treatment, for I pray heaven that no temptation may ever lead me to commit a crime, for which my own conscience would punish me more, a thousand times more, than the public infamy with which you just now threatened me. But this I will say, the man who treats his wife as you treat me, provokes, by the strongest conceivable incentives, the very crime he is afraid of. What motive can be so powerful with a woman to preserve her husband's honour as her affection and respect for him? Weak, and

craving for a loving heart to lean upon, she is driven by such conduct as yours to seek for sympathy elsewhere. I need not tell you that while a woman's beauty lasts, her difficulty is, not to find, but to avoid a lover. For your own sake and for mine do not force temptation upon me. And now for to-morrow: you have invited the neighbours to shoot with you?"

"Yes, what is to be done? I am so ill—this affair has so upset me. I know I shall have an attack of the gout. What am I to do? I can't put them off. Who is to manage the whole thing? This unfortunate business! People coming to meet the duke. Nothing could be so unlucky. If North—no I cannot speak to him, I can't indeed. Dear, dear, what is to be done?" and the unhappy creature whined, and wrung his hands like a child.

“I have considered everything,” said Daisy ;  
“if you will do as I advise, I promise that all shall  
yet go well.”

“My precious ! I will do anything in the world  
you bid me.”

“Here then,” said Daisy, busying herself at his  
writing-table, “sit down at once, and write a note  
to Lord Northern, and say——”

“What ! to him ? Good God ! And after what has  
happened ? It is impossible, indeed, indeed it is.”

“Very well then, you must do as you think  
proper ; I cannot help you. But whether you write  
to him or not, I must insist on an explanation to-  
morrow. You have accused me in the presence of  
a third person ; and be that person who it may, to  
him you must acknowledge that you were to  
blame.” And she drew her robe about her as if to  
depart.

“Stay, stay, do not leave me, my darling. I will—I will write to him : what am I to say ?”

“‘My dear Northern——’”

“But Daisy, my love, think of what has passed.”

“‘My dear Northern,’” repeats the lady resolutely ; “‘I cannot rest until I have conveyed to you my unspeakable regret for the misunderstanding which the unfortunate accidents’—two c’s—‘of to-night have given rise to. It is not necessary that I should repeat to you the explanation which Lady de Crecy has afforded me concerning her presence in the library,’—stop, scratch out ‘her,’ ‘your presence,’ we’ll say.”

“Eh ? Why so, my dear ?”

“Why ? Because—well, because there is no necessity to proclaim that Lady de Crecy is called upon to explain *her* conduct to any one.”

“True, true, to be sure, of course not.”

“Suffice it to say, that I now thoroughly comprehend my own unpardonable——”

“But, my love,” whined the writer, “you did admit that——”

“Yes, yes, never mind that now : ‘unpardonable blunder,’—unpardonable underlined, please—and can only say that I must have been out of my senses when I suffered myself to be led astray by appearances, which never’—underline ‘never’—‘could have justified such hasty and absurd conclusions——’”

“Would you say ‘absurd,’ my love?” asks the penman, deferentially.

“Were they not absurd?” returns the lady.

“And now about the shooting : write——”

“Ah yes,” says his lordship, “we’ve said enough about the other.”

“Of course you will not allow this foolish affair to alter in any way the pleasant relations——”

“Ahem! *pleasant?* Better omit pleasant, I think.”

“The friendly relations,’ then, ‘that have hitherto subsisted between us. You must not let it curtail your visit, nor suffer it to interfere with any plans which it may suit your own convenience to make.’ I must tell you,” said Daisy, interrupting her dictation, “that I myself shall request Lord Northern to leave the house the day after the shooting.”

“You, my love? you will request him?”

“Yes, I. Had you consulted my wishes, *you* would have taken that step a week ago. But I am resolved that his presence here shall no longer be the occasion of perpetual annoyance to me.”

“Daisy, Daisy ! I thought we had made peace.”

“This is the only way to keep it,” says she.

“‘Convenience,’ full stop. ‘In proof of good feeling between us, I hope you will undertake, as usual, the management of the battue to-morrow. I fear my health will prevent my carrying a gun. I must therefore depend entirely on your kindness for providing our common friends with sport. That no one knows how to direct this so well as yourself, is but one of many reasons (which I am sure you will appreciate) for my making the request, and for your granting the favour. Believe me, yours sincerely, De C.’”

Lady de Crecy folded the letter which her husband had written, sealed it herself, and took it away with her. She was aware that it contained many expressions which on second thoughts his lordship might discover objections to. And she

was sufficiently intimate with her husband to know that he was quite capable of substituting some document of his own, and yet declare he had forwarded the one that she had dictated. The truth is, the whole time he had been writing he was calculating on a private revisal of the letter, and fully intended to transcribe such portions of it only as met with his deliberate approval. He observed his wife's precautions with dismay, and offered to save her trouble by sending the note with his valet in the morning. But her ladyship replied that the simplest plan would be for her to give it to the marquis at breakfast-time. This settled the matter. But so cordially did Lord De Crecy hate his young guest that, if left to himself, no sense of prudence, neither the difficulty about the shooting, nor the risk of fighting a duel, would have induced him to write in so conciliatory a



tone. Northern had struck him,—at all events had knocked a pistol out of his hand, and in doing so had pushed him down. This provocation was doubly galling. The blow was not yet returned. But worse than the blow was the fact that the young gentleman had constituted himself Daisy's protector. The lover had defended the wife against the husband. He—Lord De Crecy—had been humiliated by acknowledged jealousy of the man he hated most in the world. While to make matters worse, this very man had chastised him; instead of receiving punishment for crimes, which, though undetected, had doubtless been committed. Of all the many bitter feelings that rankled at his heart, the letter he had just penned gave no vent to a single one. There was no comfort to be got out of the thought that the line he had taken might pass for magnanimity. He assumed

that his true character was accurately reflected in the mirror of Northern's judgment. Far the likeliest opinion for the young marquis to form would be that the writer of such a letter was both hypocrite and poltroon. There was but one vague consolation to mitigate the bitterness of these reflections. Daisy had promised to get Lord Northern out of the house immediately the shooting was over. For a time at all events there would be some respite. And the only happiness Lord De Crecy had to look forward to, was the possibility of protracting the young lover's absence, by such devices as chance and his own cunning might henceforth provide.

With all his troubles, however, Lord de Crecy was tossing about in feverish slumber long before his wife even sought repose. She too had a letter to indite. For it would be easier to write "Lord

Northern, you must leave this house to-morrow," than to say it. Not that Lady de Crecy would have shrunk from speaking this boldly out, or any other sentence indeed, which her duty told her must be spoken. When this same notion of Duty was in the ascendant, the fair martyr would compress her sweet lips, turn her lovely eyes to heaven, commend herself to the gods, and leap into the deepest of Curtian gulphs, with the most headlong of Virtue's champions. Still, by writing she escaped the perils of vocal argument. Northern might beg to be allowed to stay on. And then, so much of her strength, so many of her resolutions, oozed away when she was face to face with him. In point of fact, she was stronger than she supposed. Yet she felt miserably weak when he was at her side. Nor could she overcome the belief that he must dis-

cern how terribly afraid she was of yielding. She meditated long ere she decided on the sort of letter she should write to him. She had so much to say, her heart was so full, she could pour out such volumes of kind advice, of remonstrance, of entreaties, of carefully concealed affection, yet irrevocably fixed resolves: but no, that must not be. It was impossible to speak of herself without doing more harm than good. The two ideas she would have given worlds to find utterance for, were these—her love (her affection, as she called it to herself); and the impassable gulf which separated them for ever. On the first she was doomed to silence. And as to the other, it was sickening to think of. It was no satisfaction to write of *that*, unless she could give vent to all. In the end she elected to express herself as follows:—

“I have seen the letter Lord de Crecy has addressed to you. He hopes that what happened last night may be unnoticed and forgotten. Let me add my earnest entreaties to the same effect. There is however but one way to save me the repetition of such a scene. If you leave I shall at least be unmolested. But if you remain it must be at the cost of my peace : and, as you now know, possibly at the risk of personal safety.

“DAISY DE CRECY.”

## CHAPTER XII.

AT breakfast next morning Lord de Crecy did not come down. Daisy, who was very late, announced as a message from her husband that he was suffering from a slight attack of gout; and though he could not join the shooters, that he hoped his absence would in nowise mar their sport; for which the necessary arrangements had been made. The duke politely expressed his regrets; but added quietly, with a nod at his son, "I venture to say your ladyship will find no difficulty in persuading some one to fill his place."

"Did you hear the old boy?" whispers little

St. Kitts to Sir Percy, with a knowing wink of the eye. "Fill his place, eh Percy!"

The two were helping themselves to broiled pheasant at the sideboard.

"If," returned the baronet laconically, "we miss nothing but De Crecy to-day, we shall make a right good bag."

"Oh I hope so," was Daisy's reply to the duke. "Lord Northern is used to the part of field-marshal, and Lord de Crecy wishes him to take it to-day. Here I presume is his commission, under the sign manual." She held up a letter, which Northern left his place to receive from her hand. With half a glance the young marquis perceived the writing on the cover to be her own.

"Thank you," said he, composedly, putting the letter into his pocket. "I will attend punctually to my instructions."

How could Daisy dare to deliver such papers as we know these to be, in the presence of a score of people, many of whom she must have believed to be conversant with Northern's secret, if not with her own? How could she, with so many eyes upon her, place a letter in the hand of one to whom she imagined it would be as a death-warrant? How could she venture upon Northern's instantly recognizing her writing, and upon his putting the letter by till he was alone? He might have torn it open at once, and have exposed them both by want of self-command. How could she act thus in the face of such risk, and behave the while with perfect self-possession, grace, and cheerfulness? There is but one answer to these questions—she was a woman. There are men who can show a placid front under the most galling fire. There are men who can unctuously light their pipes with the



scraps of paper which records the most sacred pledges of love and honour ; men who can calmly whittle their nails with the blade they have just drawn through a windpipe—and think moreover only of the whittling. But where concealment is the business, we men have not a chance. No matter what Jemima was doing when your hand was on the door : and perhaps butter will *not* melt in James' mouth. But when you enter, James' face is as scarlet as a chili : while Jemima is embroidering as innocently as Penelope. As Penelope, I say ; for who knows how Penelope was occupied in the absence of Ulyses ? Did Mrs. U. spend the whole of her time in stitching and unstitching, think you ? No, madam ; in trifles of this kind—of this kind, mark me—you women beat us all to fits. Let the matter be sufficiently serious—what shall we say ? The crossing of a

thoroughfare, for instance. Zounds! One would think a troop of cavalry—the horses, i.e.—were at your heels. Now a dash on this side, now a dash on t'other, till, bewildered and terror-stricken, you rush, with tight-shut eyes, plump into one's very arms. Timidity and daring, coyness and effrontery, tenderness and cruelty, simplicity and artfulness, weakness and strength—how nicely are these blended in the one strange compound—woman!

But though Daisy de Crecy could practice her harmless dissimulations with a skill which every lady in the breakfast-room might have matched; it must not be inferred from the perfection of the performance that the accomplished actress sustained the rôle so easily. That astute observer, Evans, noticed the paleness of Lady de Crecy's complexion, and the azure shades which encircled her expressive eyes. As he touched her

hand in wishing her good-morning he was struck with its parched heat. He remarked too the constrained tone of her gaiety; and as no one was more familiar than himself with her natural and unembarrassed manner, no one could more readily detect its factitious substitute. In a word, he settled that something serious had transpired to cause the obvious change. Whether it was between the lady and Northern, or had to do with Froth and Terrier, he could not yet decide.

Painful indeed was the tumultuous commotion which raged within the fair bosom of poor Daisy. She gave herself no credit for her own powers of deception. She felt as if everyone in the room must read her wan and harassed looks. It had been nearly morning before she lay down, and then it was not to sleep, but to toss and turn and fret. And when exhaustion at length closed her

eyes, hideous apparitions of death haunted her, and wild dreams in which Northern was present.

She dreamed she was on board a vessel crowded with passengers, among whom she recognized Froth and Terrier, and Lord de Crecy dressed in the captain's uniform. The waste of waters was interminable. Universal stillness reigned on board. It was night, and something—something vaguely terrible—was for ever following in the ship's black wake. Presently the vessel began to sink. Then she said to herself, I have been asleep; I have had fearful dreams, but I am awake now. This is death—death at last! Mercy! what a hurricane, how it lightens! God save us! what awful thunder! Then she rushed on deck; and sought amongst the crowd for Northern. Northern alone can save her. She sees Evans at the helm, and screams to him for Northern. But mountains

of sea wash over them. The ship sinks and sinks deeper and deeper, till gradually she loses consciousness.

A choir of mermaids is chanting to the sweet chords of invisible harps. The mermaids float gracefully around her, waving garlands of bright seaweed. As far as she can see down avenues of soft pink coral, countless nymphs are singing and waving garlands of seaweed. By-and-by a car approaches, and the music grows more distinct. On the car, which is of burnished gold, studded with sapphires and emeralds and all manner of precious stones, sits the figure of a beautiful youth : on his head is a crown of diamonds, in his hand is a flaming trident, his tunic is purple, all ablaze with diamonds. The car is drawn by strange amorphous fishes, which change their gorgeous hues with every movement ; and impart

to the watery depths the luminous colours which flash from their metallic scales. As they swim towards her she is overwhelmed with the dazzling light (electric, no doubt) from the resplendent car. Gradually her very being is absorbed in light: she is conscious only of rushing chords of music. And as she feels that her own identity mingles with the divinely thrilling rays, she breathes the name of Love, and passes into darkness.

And now she sits beneath the low veranda of a palm-leaf hut. Before her bends a bay of silvery sand. The turquoise sea ripples and sparkles on the thirsty beach. Behind her rise lofty mountains. The deep gullies down their sides are rank with vegetation. The hut is overgrown with orchids, whose delicious fragrance embalms the air. Humming-birds flit like butterflies from bloom to bloom; and sparkle like jewels in the

sun, as they poise themselves above the nectared chalices. The only sound beside the plashing and the hissing of the sea is from noisy flocks of parrots, screaming with delight over their perpetual feast of fruits. Spread upon the beach is a fishing-net. Northern, in sailor's garb, is mending it; she herself is making (what do you suppose?) baby-linen; and a curly-headed boy is playing with the shells about her feet. Suddenly the air is darkened. The wind grows icy cold. (The orchestra rumbles like fifty stomach-aches.) The sea rises, the beauteous child is swept away upon a tide of blood. The lurid clouds assume the forms of demons. She tries to scream, but cannot. Northern is struggling with a monster inside the hut, which is now the library at Tinselby. A knife, dripping with gore, is brandished in her face. She tries to move, but cannot. Her dress

—an evening dress, the one she got from Madame — to wear the night that Northern came — is steeped in blood, everybody will know *whose* blood. Everybody is pointing at her, mocking her, gibbering at her. Lord de Crecy puts a pistol to her head and fires.

The explosion was the bang of the shutters, which the housemaid was just now opening. The climax was disagreeable to be sure, but there were scenes in the dream which she would gladly have prolonged. Indeed she tried to doze on for the chance of being once more transported to the bottom of the sea, or heaven knows where. But her head was aching; and the horrid day's real work was before her. A day of acting, a day demanding more energy, more exertion than she felt it possible to put forth. Northern was to be dismissed; this was his last day: Northern, the



father of that beautiful curly-headed little—  
tush! no wonder she was feverish and agitated  
when she came to breakfast.

There she sat now, smiling and chatting, and  
lovely as ever, though so pale. In the intervals  
of conversation, as the visions of dreamland flitted  
across her, she wondered, when she caught North-  
ern's eye fixed upon her, whether those airy or  
rather watery phantasms were visible to him also.  
When two persons between whom mesmeric cur-  
rents have passed are in rapport, the recipient, it  
is said, is conscious of the generator's sensations.  
Was there not a rapport between her and North-  
ern? Did not an accidental touch, even of their  
garments, send its cold shock through every fibre  
of their frames? She dared not meet his gaze  
lest he should interpret from her eyes the secret  
of her heart. Would he divine her thoughts

while these were filled with the apparitions of last night? She blushed to think it possible.

But Lord Northern knew of nothing except his own impatience to escape the breakfast-table. Furtively every now and then he touched the letter in his pocket to verify the existence of this tangible link between himself and Daisy. What could it be about? The packet was large and weighty. He scarcely gave a thought to the message from Lord de Crecy which it was supposed to contain. His conjectures were wrapt up in the behests which he knew it must contain from her. His destiny and hers were involved in the climax which the events of the preceding evening had brought about. When would the moment arrive for devouring those pregnant words? As a rule Northern cared as little as it is possible to care what others thought of his behaviour. And

this natural independence was often heightened into arrogant defiance by the accidents of his social stand; but at the same time his pride revolted at the notion of betraying his deepest emotions to the impertinent curiosity of the herd. At the present moment especially he did not choose that Froth, and St. Kitts, and Helen and her mother, and the lot of them should see how impatience was consuming him, and how incapable he was of controlling it. Besides, there was intense though not unmixed pleasure in the contemplation of pouring over that long letter of Daisy's. It must of course contain his dismissal, but might it not also contain passionate confessions of her love? (there was no saying after such provocation as she had received last night), perhaps even a consent to fly with him? There is a pleasure in deferring pleasure; but in this instance

it was rather too protracted. The party had more to talk about than usual. Rumours had slipped out concerning the quarrel. The admiral had naturally given a brilliant description of it to Mrs. Lanyard. This lady had descended to the drawing-room earlier than usual that she might be the first to narrate the particulars to her ignorant and inquisitive friends. Lady Selina was overwhelmed with concern, and calculated at once the probable consequences of the affair upon her own prospects of matrimony. The fate, look you, of every bachelor was remotely connected with her ladyship's speculations on this subject. Mrs. Seabright declared she had but a poor opinion of their country practitioner; and on reckoning up the expenses of a first-rate man from London concluded upon the whole that it would be best for the poor young man to die. At

the breakfast-table the ladies spoke of the affair in a whisper, so as to keep it from Sir Percy's hearing. But the bluff admiral no sooner entered the room than he bawled out, "Well Froth, my hearty, what cheer? Have you seen the lawyer this morning?" The old sailor had no very precise notions of Mr. Terrier's professional qualifications. "I never saw one of the quill-driving breed show such mettle. Dash my buttons! but I thought one of you'd lose of the number of his mess afore you'd done playing with that cheese-toaster together."

"Cheese-toaster?" says the duke, "what's the admiral talking about?"

"Oh nothing," whispers Lady de Crecy. "Some silly dispute about cards I believe. I wish the admiral would not rake it up again."

“Is there really any danger of lock-jaw, Lord St. Kitts?” asked the duchess, timidly (Mrs. Lan-yard had informed her before breakfast that fatal symptoms had already declared themselves).

“By Jove!” says St. Kitts, shaking his head, “I don’t know, but I wouldn’t mind taking odds about it.”

Her grace, who had never been on the turf, did not gather his exact meaning. “How dreadful! how very dreadful!” she exclaimed, picturing to herself the gashed hand. “It makes one feel quite ill. Don’t talk of it, pray.”

“Take a pick-me-up,” suggests St. Kitts, who might have thought her grace was about to faint.

“A what?” inquires the duchess.

“A pick-me-up,” repeats St. Kitts; “B. and S. is the best at this time of day.” But the duchess was not enlightened.

“I do hope and trust, Sir Percy,” said Lady Selina, “you have not disabled the poor man for life. Which hand is it that he has lost?”

“God knows,” says the colonel, “he is deuced lucky not to have lost them both.”

“How you *can* talk in that way! If he had lost both he would have been good for nothing.”

“That’s true,” says the sententious colonel.

“What an awful row it must have been,” says Miss Helen to Lord Northern. “And did *you* really separate them? What heroism! you deserve a medal from the what-d’ye-call-em society, I should so like to have seen you, though I’m sure I should have screamed. Weren’t you frightened?”

“For myself or for them, do you mean?”

“For yourself, of course! Why you know you don’t care about any one else in the world.”



“H’m,” said he, putting his hand into his pocket to touch the letter. “I’ve a great regard for Terrier, he’s a good honest little fellow.”

“Still I should hardly have thought you would have risked your life for him. I wonder now whether you would have done as much for me?”

When the game is wild and distant it is well to load with a heavy charge. Helen’s game was distant indeed—absent almost, as she could plainly perceive.

“Eh? For you? What do you mean? If you had been struggling with Froth? Gracious! Helen, if the brute——”

“Hush! don’t speak so loud. Ha, ha! what an idea! Fancy! I didn’t mean that exactly. Besides I’m twice as strong as that wretched creature: I should knock him down in a twinkling if he had the cheek——”



“To touch yours? eh Nelly?”

“Pshaw! I should like to see him try it on; or any one else.”

“Defiance provokes daring.”

“How do you mean? Defiance?” says Miss Nell, coyly averting her pretty face.

“Wait till we’re alone, and you shall have a practical illustration.”

“I don’t understand you,” say Miss Helen’s lips. “I wonder whether he’ll dare?” say Miss H.’s thoughts.

At last the moment of release arrived: Northern flew to his room; meaning to lock himself in, and there feast on his treasure in secrecy and seclusion. Alas! the housemaids were at work, and his lordship’s valet was arranging his lordship’s clothes. It would be long before they had finished, for the valet, being a gentleman of

wit and gallantry, would doubtless entertain the two young women with many brilliant and polite remarks. Driven therefore from this asylum he hurried off to the conservatory. Here at any rate he will find a sanctuary. Flinging himself into an easy-chair, amidst orange trees and balmy flowers, he drew forth the delicious packet; and tearing off the cover, he guages at a glance the tenor of its contents.

There was the brief note—how brief!—from her, and an enclosure, sealed, from Lord de Crecy. Daisy's letter was laid aside, reserved till every other thought was done with. De Crecy's was opened and read: with difficulty he brought himself to translate the language into corresponding ideas. "That I should repeat to you," he iterated, "the explanations which Lady de Crecy has afforded me concerning your presence in the

library": "so," he mused, "they have had it out together, and she has made him write this bosh instead of sending me a challenge. The cur! he dares not face the devil with so much hypocrisy on his soul!" "H'm, h'm; his unpardonable blunder forsooth. Do I not know that he suspects her still? and imputes to her—the darling angel!—conduct for which his own foul life can give no other precedent? Why does he try to gull me with his ridiculous protestations of generosity? Does he think I will forgive him? The beast! never—no never! . . . The shooting—yes, I would manage the shooting for him, if I could put a charge of shot into his filthy carcase. I'll see him and his shooting—" the remainder of the sentence was finished with a grind of the teeth, and a crunching of the offensive document in Lord Northern's angry fist. "Now," said he,

tuning his mind to a very different key. Before unfolding Daisy's letter he pressed it fervently to his lips. How short it was. It's very briefness forewarned him of its unwelcome tone. On first perusal it seemed to contain nothing but his congé. The question of superintending the day's sport was of such trivial consequence that he forgot that in the shock of separation. He must go. There was no evading this. He must be off. His last day at Tinselby had come. So long as he stayed on, so long as he could say to himself, "I shall see her again," his present life had its amenities. He might be stretched on the rack, but his parched lips were now and then moistened with balm administered by a beloved hand. She might avoid him by keeping her own room, by surrounding herself with her company, but could not evade his society at breakfast, at lunch,

at dinner. The whole evening she must be in the same room with him. At night they slept under the same roof, they breathed the same atmosphere, mixed with the same people. True, the minutes which kept her from his sight were hours. True, while he was not at her side impatience and *ennui* were unbearable. Still the minutes did pass, he did see her again, again he heard her voice, even when not addressed to himself, and every last word and last movement and look were fresh and ever fresh food to live upon till the intervals of separation were gone by. But away from Tinselby altogether,—ah, the misery, the torment of it! And this was now to be repeated; again, ay, over and over and again. “There is, and can be, no end to it,” cried the unhappy youth, clasping his throbbing head in both his hands as if to prevent it splitting with the

anguish of despair. In vain he fixed his eyes on vacancy, and strained them with gazing into the future. There was no comfort there, no respite, no peace, nothing but insatiable, unbridled, and disappointed passion; nothing but a Hell, to which any other (I should say) must be Elysium.

The unlucky emigrant who has left home in the fond dream that every turn of the spade will bring up a nugget, learns by degrees to content himself with the minute grains which, with aching heart, he finds to be the actual yield. Northern read Daisy's letter again and again; but the outpourings of confessed love, which he had counted on, were not there. He sifted the words now for one that might by straining bear the wished for interpretation. He selected this sentence: "If you leave, I shall at least be unmolested. If you remain, it must be at the cost of my peace."

“It is then,” he argued, “only to save her from molestation that she wishes me to be gone. The wish to be rid of me is forced upon her by that man’s brutality. But for his violence she would wish me to stay. Of course she would wish me to stay. ‘If you remain,’ she says, ‘it must be at the cost of my peace.’ What admission of her own unhappiness could be more clear? What avowal could be more direct that her anguish is analogous to my own—that she suffers as I suffer, and from the same cause?” At this discovery of their meaning he kissed the delightful words with renewed rapture. “See here too,” he exclaims: “‘and, as you know, at the risk of my personal safety,’ the ‘my’ is erased. What an exquisite inuendo! Yes, dearest! you knew that I should understand you. Why is this little ‘my’ blotted out, yet left so legible? It was rejected

because you wished to comprehend us both in one sentiment. Your thought was of *our* safety. How sweet is this 'our' when it binds two destinies into inseparable and perfect oneness." When this thimbleful of comfort was drained, his reflections again took a gloomy turn. "What availed it if she did love him? This only made his lot more hard to bear. 'Twere better she should be indifferent. After all, was it sure that she did love him? Certainly her love was not like his. It was under her control, and therefore cold. Her nature was cold—cold and hard. She had no commiseration for his sufferings. She was incapable of comprehending the intensity of a devotion like his. How else could she have written such a letter? So unfeeling—so cruel. What an idiot he was to go on year after year idolising an idol, worshipping a creature of his own creation. What else was



this Daisy of his fancy ? The real Daisy was as unworthy of his love, as she was insensible to its depth and constancy."

But who does not know how this kind of fever alternates with ague ? now this way, now that. There he sat motionless externally, but tossed fearfully by a tornado within. So dead to the outward world was he, that he did not notice the figure which stood near him ; although it was the very being about whom he was at that minute raving. Lady de Crecy had sought the retirement of the conservatory for reasons somewhat similar to Lord Northern's. She desired to snatch a few minutes of privacy, where amid her darling flowers, which she loved like any bee, she could soothe her nerves and brace her energies for the duties of the day.

The irregular shape of the conservatory, filled,

too, as it was, with evergreens and large tropical plants, hindered her from observing Northern, whose chair was drawn within, and concealed by, a sort of bower of lemon and orange trees. She came upon him quite unawares; and stood a second undecided whether to retreat or stay; a movement of his head in her direction left her without choice. Both were for the instant equally astonished and taken aback. The lady's habit of self-command enabled her to give a lead to the conversation.

“You here!” she exclaimed, with a nervous smile. “Why! I thought you had been with the shooters. They are looking for you everywhere. They can't stir you know till you are there to lead them.”

Northern rose slowly from his seat. “How could you tell the shooters were looking for me

if you thought that I was with them?" There was no rudeness in his manner. He too smiled as he spoke; but both his voice and look were full of sadness. "That you supposed I was with them however," he continued, "is pretty certain, or you would not have entered here."

She tried to conceal her trouble by breaking off a sprig of orange blossom. "Have you read my letter?" was the reply. The question slipped from her tongue inadvertently. She repented of it as soon as put.

"I have."

"And you will comply with my request?" she pursued, with eyes upon the ground.

"I have no choice."

"You are not angry?"

"With whom?"

"Me."

“ No.”

“ It is for the best.”

“ What is ? ”

“ That we should—that you should leave.”

“ You were going to express yourself differently  
—less harshly.”

“ Was I ? ’Tis all the same. You must feel  
that it is best : do you not ? ”

“ For whom ? For whom ? I say.”

“ For everybody.”

“ Who is everybody ? ”

“ Yourself, my husband.”

“ Your *husband* ! and for no one else, Daisy ? ”

“ Why, of course for me, if that’s what you  
mean.”

“ Yes, that’s what I did mean. But do not mean  
it any longer. It is now a matter of indifference  
to me.”

“Thank you. You are kind.” A sudden gush of tears was here gulped down with difficulty.

“Why should it be otherwise?” he asked.

She replied with a look only. A look full of tenderness and reproach. He was stone now.

“How can it be otherwise to me,” he went on, “since it is indifferent to you whether I go or stay?”

“How can you speak in that way?”

“Is it not so?”

She was silent.

“Is it not so? Why will you not answer me?”

One of the tears, a large heavy pearl, could keep its place no longer. It fell to the marble floor. The tear's resting-place was not harder than Lord Northern's heart.

“No, I am wrong. You are not indifferent. In one sense of course you are not : when I am gone



you will be saved from molestation; my presence I am aware does subject you to the risk of annoyance. Nothing but my selfishness blinded me to the fact so long. The truth is, Daisy, I was fool enough to think—well, no matter. There is an end of it now. I shall be miserable for a time, I suppose. God knows what will become of me! But as not a soul in the world cares——”

“Northern!” Daisy could say no more, she would have choked else.

“No,” he pursued, “I was worthless before I loved you, and I shall become worthless again.” And the thought of his misery at last touched the heart that was insensible to every sorrow but its own.

The case was different with Daisy. She raised her swimming eyes and dimly beheld the young

Apollo—magnificent in his olive velvet, superbly picturesque in his scarlet neck-tie, his head bare, his short brown curls wildly dishevelled, his close-shaven face showing the fine outlines of his chin and mouth—she beheld in fancy this young god of her affections knocked off his pedestal, shattered and profaned by the foul hands of corruption. She heard his threat, and believed it. She heard him lay the charge to her. She thought of herself only as his destroyer. It pained her sharply. She forgot her own misery and grieved for him.

“Daisy,” he took her hand, “if I could leave you in the persuasion that you not only knew what anguish your sentence of banishment inflicts upon me, but that you pitied me, felt some slight sorrow for me, it would——”

“I do,” she gently murmured ; and he felt the soft pressure of her softer hand.

“ O Daisy ! I could bear my lot, if not without suffering, at least with better courage, could I but believe that the hateful struggle was shared by you. One word from you, dear Daisy. Think how long, how truly I have loved you. Think what this love has been to me. How it has purified me. How it has raised me from an abyss of worthlessness to—to the contemplation of all that is pure and lovely. I can endure anything—everything, I will go, I will never see you again till you yourself shall summon me, you shall never hear my name even, never again shall my presence cast its baneful shade upon your happiness—but grant this one consolation to support me, Daisy. Speak, dearest! ”

An arm is round her pliant waist. The two faces are in close proximity. She trembles from head to foot: indeed she might fall did he not



support her. Her brain whirls : her consciousness is falling.

“ Do you love me ? ” he whispers, and the next moment his lips are glued to hers.

In an instant every nerve and muscle recovered its wonted tension and vitality : there was no more faintness nor timid trembling, no more weakness of either flesh or spirit. Northern was a big strong man, but his power in that moment of her mighty revulsion was nothing as compared with hers : she flung him from her : she darted at him a look of wild resentment, such as might have followed had he struck her. He stood rooted to the spot. She turned from him, and fled.

## CHAPTER XIII.

THE morning was bright and frosty, an inch or two of snow lay upon the ground ; but it was dry and crisp, and creaked musically under the foot, as the crowd of spórtsmen, keepers, and beaters moved to and fro in front of the hall in busy preparation for the battue. Nothing could be more inspiriting than the *ensemble* of this cheerful scene. The sky a dazzling blue, the ground as dazzling white, and rendered more sparkling by the glitter of the surface crystals, which the winter's sun had just power to liquefy. The keepers in their green velveteens, scarlet waistcoats, and

gold-laced hats, the gun-barrels shining as they caught the rays, the frantic joy of the retrievers bounding and dancing round their masters and rolling their curly coats in a bath of snow—all contributed to the liveliness and brilliancy of the picture. By degrees the gentlemen assembled on the lawn. They were now lounging in groups, and waiting only for the arrival of their director, the Marquis of Northern. Here was the duke in his costume of the past half century, with gaiters above his knees, his old Joe Manton—flint and steel—under his arm. A huge Newfoundland, of a breed now rarely seen, watched and followed his master's movements with stately solemnity; treating the importunate pother of his canine brethren with dignified urbanity seasoned with disdain. Here too was the admiral, in a pea-jacket, holding forth on the merits of a

single-barrel fowling-piece, which he called his "stern-chaser." "She'll fetch 'em down at any range," says he, "provided you allow enough for windage, and is as good for round shot as she is for grape or canister."

"Egad! admiral," says one of the party, "I hope you will stick to the canister to-day, or some of your two-legged game will be of the unfeathered kind, I fear."

"Damme," says the owner of the weapon, "it won't be the first time neither. A slug or two about the quarter-gallery of that hot-headed lobster would be a wholesome counter-irritation, by George!"

The baronet, to whom the allusion applied, was just now cursing his soldier servant. "Double," he roared, [calling his man up to him, "why the — don't you double? Blast you!"]

To be the colonel's regimental servant was no sinecure, I fancy. Good conduct badges, ten or fifteen years' service, and the appertinent pensions, were often forfeited by his bondmen for a few minutes' unpunctuality, an ill-varnished boot, or some such grievous breach of military discipline.

Mr. Seabright, who by the way had long given up shooting on the score of humanity, and merely came out to see the start, was not a little shocked at the colonel's language. "My dear Sir Percy," said he, gently laying his hand on the other's arm, with a smile to calm a fever; "the race is not to the swift. You see the man has his pockets full of ammunition, and cannot run without spilling it."

"Jolly weather, squire," says Lord St. Kitts, addressing the last speaker; "not much pressure on the square inch to day, eh?"

“It is indeed delightful,” said the rector, radiant as the very sun; “it almost makes me wish to carry a gun myself. Though ’twere a sin (for me, however) to devote such a heavenly day to the destruction of innocent life.”

“Ah,” returned the earl, “I don’t go in for that sort of thing. Have a weed? No! pinch of snuff, perhaps? Well there’s no accounting for taste. For my part, can’t do without it—this last infirmity of a noble mind. But there’s some excuse for me: I reserve all other vices for my old age.”

“Heaven forbid!” said the parson, “that you should ever indulge in one of them. Though as to innocent pleasure, I am all for every one’s enjoyment of it. We must however be careful, as the great and wise Locke puts it, that we be not deceived by the flattery of a present pleasure to lose a greater.”

“The great and wise party aforesaid has my fullest concurrence,” rejoined his lordship. “Wine, women, and tobacco, as another eminent bloke expresses himself—or words to that effect—are indispensable to them as can’t do without. I acknowledge my exigencies, and rejoice to find them supported by so venerable a pillar of the church.”

Mr. Seabright was about to pursue this ethical discussion when a general move and a cry of “Here he is, here comes Northern,” brought the colloquy to an end.

“I hope you have not been waiting for me,” says the marquis to a knot of impatient country neighbours. “I’m so shocked. I had no notion you were here. Father, why didn’t you make a start of it?”

“Not without you, boy,” says the old gentle-

man, proudly ; " I know nothing about driving pheasants into a corner and shooting into the brown, as you youngsters call it. In my day we were satisfied with walking 'em up. But I suppose there ain't a span'el between this and Clumber now."

In a few minutes the whole party was in motion. As they spread over the lawn they looked like a little army ; and ere they approached their first covert, troops of hares began to skirmish over the park in all directions like piquets of light cavalry. Mr. Boaks, the head keeper, an individual who appeared to be all body and no legs, was in close attendance on the marquis. Since daybreak this functionary had been hard at work. He had planted his nets, placed his stops, and fed and partly counted some fifteen hundred pheasants. And if keepers be troubled with senti-



ments or reflections the least resembling those of other mortals, Boaks must have experienced a pleasing conflict of feelings as he looked upon those confiding birds which '*pecked* the hand just raised to shed their blood.' The keeper's supreme hour had arrived. Would the bag be greater than that of former years? Would it surpass the great day's sport at Lord Hurlingham's, when that nobleman on a certain royal occasion had a thousand pheasants down from Mr. Bailey's preserves in London Town? Would the snow stop the pheasants from running? Lord Northern, in answer to these anxious questions, believed there was no snow to signify inside the woods; and if the birds were given plenty of time there was no fear but they would go ahead.

When the guns were told off to their respective places, and Boaks had himself conducted his

'ighness,' as he called the duke, to an advanced post, the word was given to "go on slowly." In a few minutes the firing became continuous. Fearful was the slaughter to the bewildered denizens of the wood. St. Kitts, nimble as a cat, blazed away on every side, now bowling over a rabbit between the legs of some pottering squire, now 'realizing' a woodcock before it rose a yard above the underwood. The admiral, confiding in his redoubtable stern-chaser, let drive at every thing without regard to range. While Froth, too out of temper to touch a feather, consoled himself by perpetually anathematizing his unlucky man.

Leaving the shooters to enjoy themselves in this way, let us now return to Tinselby. How fared it with the unfortunate Daisy after the incident which terminated the interview in the greenhouse? It would be no easy task to analyze

her emotions in the first moments after what we may call that sad catastrophe. She had been betrayed, by a most fortuitous succession of untoward events, into something equivalent to an avowal of her passion. The constant strain of the last few weeks had brought on unawares a state of sensibility which rendered her liable at any moment to some impulsive outbreak of feeling. Nature required relief; and took it after her own fashion, without consulting the casuistic scruples of the patient. The scene of the preceding evening, the restless and dreamful night, the effort to dismiss Northern, the sympathy she felt for his distress, the restraint imposed upon her outward behaviour in a house crowded with guests, the shock at finding herself alone with Lord Northern, his cruel charges of indifference, of selfish regard for her own interests, and for

these only; above all, the thought of bringing perdition on the life and soul of the man she loved,—combined with overwhelming force to scatter her studiously framed resolves to the winds, and leave her unprotected in such a crisis to the rapturous entrancement of her own and her lover's passion. This one brief instant had however sufficed for the therapeutic purposes of reaction. At once there followed a sense of humiliation and reproach, a feeling of ruffled dignity, a blow to the pride of rectitude, a contempt for her own weakness, a shame that scorched her cheeks, vexation and anger with herself, and still hotter anger against the man who had made her the victim of this turmoil.

These were the direct consequences of the fact. Presently their ferment subsided a little. The kiss—that first, very first kiss of sexual love in

all her life—(ah! how sweet it was!) began to tingle on her lips again, darting its thrill through every nerve. Sin or no sin it was a fact accomplished. If she lived a thousand years that kiss would be as sweet and fresh as now.

But upon the heels of bliss, trod the sorrowing spirit of atonement. The stored-up forces of omnipotent Habit rushed to the front, like reserved troops eager to prove their intrepidity. The strength which had been quietly laid by, that strength which is accumulated little by little, day by day, till it builds up the permanent state which constitutes character, welled forth and swept before its flood every trace of weakness and indecision. "It is the first time I have consented to guilt," she mused, "it shall be the last. Regrets are idle—I am not what I was. I can never respect myself, I can never trust myself again. I have

made myself contemptible in Northern's eyes. He will think, of course, henceforth that I must yield to anything and everything. I have no longer the right to impute injustice or cruelty to Lord de Crecy. I have confessed my love, my criminal love, to another man; and am become the deserving object of my husband's wrath and jealousy. But it is useless to repine. I have but one course open. I must atone for my sin. Whatever the struggle may cost me, whatever hopes of happiness I abandon, I must be firm. However repugnant the line of conduct which conscience prescribes, I must follow it without flinching. And follow it I will. As to excuses, my sinful heart would furnish me with a thousand. Not one of them will I listen to. It were death, and misery worse than death, were I to fall into the gulf which just now yawned beneath me. How

near I was! Providence only could have rescued me. And even now, how am I to escape temptation? Only by avoiding it. To-morrow he must go. And shall I see him before he goes? How will he behave to me? And the parting? There must be no parting. And must he leave me unforgiven? It is hard to bear. But it is best so. When he is gone he will write. I will answer him, and crush his love for ever. No vacillation now; no looking forward to possible events; no subterfuge to condone subtly lurking hopes: his I never can be; his I never will be: and he must and shall believe it."

In this valiant mood she boldly faced a project, which was always vaguely present to her. It was the bitterest of all pills to swallow; but there was no help for it. Northern must marry Helen Seabright. And she—Daisy—must join the others

in bringing about the marriage. Henceforth this design must become the main purpose of her life. Her conscience could never rest until it was fulfilled. Only by the earnestness and sincerity with which she set herself to this repulsive task, could she make amends for that sinful weakness which to her dying day could never be forgotten.

A few trivial obstacles to the scheme of marrying Northern to Helen did cross her, it is true. The most formidable was the Wharton love affair. But though she had always regarded the engineer as Miss Seabright's most favoured suitor, it was evident from the girl's behaviour that Mr. Wharton's chance could hardly be made worse by the interference of any one in short, that Miss Nelly was quite ready to accept the marquis without reference to other convenience than her own.

Besides, Lady de Crecy was bent upon martyr-



dom. Come what might, she had now made up her mind to fling herself upon the funeral pile. What other offerings were consumed in the conflagration, or what the pile itself was built of, she left (conversely to practice of the faithful patriarch) to the provision of a careful Providence.

And now that the voice of duty had become imperative, it summoned her to further acts of self-negation. Contrite and subdued, she was filled with severity against herself, but in equal degree softened towards others. She had not been near her husband since last night: the neglect was a reproach to her. She had never inquired after Mr. Terrier: the omission proved how selfish and unfeeling was her heart. So she determined to seek the former at once; and then visit the wounded guest with as little delay as possible.



Lord de Crecy was at his breakfast. The unusualness of her visit surprised, if not alarmed, him. Not even the events of the past evening quite accounted for her presence: such incidents were too common to call forth such a consequence.

“Daisy!” he exclaimed, rising with astonishment to meet her; “Good morning, my love. Has anything happened?”

“I came to see how you were.”

“No! Did you though. How kind of you, darling. Here, take this easy-chair; it is more comfortable. I’m so glad to see you. You look so well, dear, this morning. That dress becomes you so wonderfully. Nothing suits you better than black velvet. You look charming.”

“I’m glad it pleases you.”

“Are you now? are you really? How nice of you to say that. There’s nothing in the world

makes me so happy as your desire to please me, Daisy.”

“I hope I shall always strive to please you. If I fail, if I inadvertently give you pain, you must be patient with, and forgive, me. I am very—wicked sometimes.”

Lord de Crecy winced. It was clear she had something exceptionally flagitious on her mind just now.

“Wicked, my love. What do you mean?”

“That I am wanting in my duty to others—to you, Lord de Crecy, at times. But I intend to be more circumspect, more watchful over my conduct. And I trust you will have fewer occasions to—think unkindly of me.”

“Unkindly? Bless my soul! You know I never, never think of you otherwise than as the purest, gentlest, best of angels. When did I ever

say anything that—well to be sure, I am now and then a little hasty, I own. And last night—but appearances deceived me. And you must do me the justice to admit that appearances were—were—in short, that there was some excuse for my loss of temper. But for God's sake, Daisy, let us say no more about it. You can't think how distressed I am about the whole affair. You know how it grieves me to give you a moment's uneasiness. And—and—did you deliver those letters, darling?"

"Yes, with my own hand."

"What did he say? Is he going?"

"Of course he will go. I wrote as I told you I would. My letter left him no choice in the matter."

"And the shooting?"

"That is all settled. Lord Northern has un-

dertaken the management. I saw the whole party start about a quarter of an hour since."

"How kind of you, dearest, to arrange these things so charmingly. Shall you take the ladies out to lunch with the shooters?"

"I believe they wish to go."

"Shall you go yourself, my love?"

"Yes, I may as well. I thought of driving the duchess in the pony carriage, and sending the others in the britska."

"If the duchess wishes it, of course you must accompany her; otherwise the day seems very raw, and there's nothing so penetrating as snow."

"I'll take good care of myself. 'Tis quite fine and warm out. You don't want me for anything?" she asked as she was leaving the room.

Lord de Crecy held out his hand, and drew his wife towards him. He would have kissed her

lips. She almost shuddered. Were they not profaned? or consecrated—which? She inclined herself, and allowed him to touch her forehead.

She then left him, and went straight to Mr. Terrier's room. The doctor had just finished dressing the agent's hand. The Duchess of Midland was there, on the same errand of charity which had brought the hostess. Her grace had been chatting with the invalid for half an hour or more. A great amount of business was often transacted between these two. Besides ministering to the wants of the Longthorpe indigent, legions of miserables—real and feigned—importuned her from London, and the United Kingdom generally. It was quite as difficult to this capacious-hearted lady to say 'no,' as it would have been in fact to comply. Every case was therefore referred to Mr. Terrier. And if the omniscience

imputed to him did not extend to the merits of the applicants, he was, at any rate, accurately acquainted with my Lady Bountiful's means of relieving them. Terrier was one of the most tender-hearted of men, yet he was not devoid of the qualifications essential to a man of business. He knew there are only twenty shillings in a pound. Her grace's information, indefinite on all statistics, was especially so on questions of currency.

Nor were the interests of this good dame confined to the physical necessities of her neighbours. She was endowed with a perennial desire to see every one comfortably settled; which often meant married, without reference (in a worldly sense) to 'settlements' of any kind. Her own life had been one continuous course of contentment. With her disposition, her acquiescence in the order of things—whatever that might be, her utter uncon-

sciousness of any "problem" not to be solved by absolute faith, she could hardly have been otherwise than happy. But inasmuch as she ascribed her happiness to her extraordinary good fortune in marriage, she (with characteristic logic) concluded that all young people must be miserable unless united in the bonds of wedlock. This being her view of life, she of course could not refuse her sympathy even when the lover's sorrows were the just reward of worse than folly. Often did it happen that when the duke returned from a meeting of the Longthorpe guardians, the duchess would ascertain that some unfortunate girl and her unfathered infant had been refused an asylum, as belonging to another parish. Then, with tears in her eyes, she would wheedle the duke, and coax Mr. Seabright, and no peace would either enjoy until the case had been reconsidered, the poor girl



admitted, and both mother and child supplied from the castle with soup, flannel petticoats, baby-linen, and heaven knows (aye, and records) what besides. "Bless this good lady's heart!" Mr. Seabright would sometimes say, "there wants no encouragement from her to fill the country side with bastards."

"He says he feels more comfortable now," replied her grace in answer to Lady de Crecy.

"Does it pain you very much?" asked the hostess.

"Oh dear no. It is a mere scratch, I assure you. I am ashamed to be the cause of so much trouble, Lady de Crecy."

"It was so wicked of Colonel Froth!" ejaculated the duchess. Had that delinquent been the sufferer, I almost fear his sentence might have been reversed.

“Yes,” says Daisy, “it was so spiteful.”

“Well,” cries Terrier, whose vanity was always on the alert, “we must admit some provocation. He got a pretty smart box on the ears.”

“I hope,” says Daisy, “it may be a lesson he will not soon forget: the horrid man! he might have killed you with that dreadful knife.”

“As to that,” says the gentleman, “he ran quite as much risk himself: I should certainly have had the best of it if I hadn’t caught my foot in the carpet. Sir Percy Froth indeed! why I could throttle half a dozen such whipper-snappers as he is, I should hope.”

“I should think,” says the duchess, “this must convince Helen Seabright what a temper Colonel Froth has.”

For such apposite remarks the duchess had quite a genius. Lady de Crecy changed colour.

And Mr. Terrier was scarcely less interested. The agent bore no malice against Sir Percy for his wound's sake, but Froth was not the man he wished to see in possession of that prize.

“I hope Miss Seabright is in no danger of any delusion on that subject,” said he. “Besides, there are other considerations which should ensure her safety; and which can hardly have escaped your grace's observation.”

“What are they?”

“Well 'tis pretty plain, I fancy, that Miss Seabright's partialities are already prepossessed in favour of a certain marquis, whom we need not name.”

“Ah!” sighed the duchess, with a tender look at Daisy (the dear soul never concealed a thought in her life). “Ah, if he would but return it!”

“But he does, at least he will,” exclaimed Daisy.

“I’m sure he will. He cannot be blind to Helen’s good qualities. And the fact of their long intimacy too—it *is* so desirable. I’m sure no one could more sincerely wish for it than I do.” There was a fervour in her tone which attracted even Mr. Terrier’s notice.

“I am *so* rejoiced to hear you say so, dear,” murmured the duchess; and gave Daisy a little squeeze of her hand; which of course she ought not to have done (so Daisy thought) in the presence of the agent.

“I must confess,” said Terrier, “such a match, though most advantageous for the Sea brights, would not be without its recommendations to his lordship. Not to mention the personal attractions of Miss Helen, which as a man (Mr. Terrier felt his superiority at the present juncture), as a man, I cannot but think worthy of the ducal

coronet!—the alliance would materially conduce to the completeness, if I may so speak, of his grace's Midland property. This, as you are aware, madam, is in places very much intersected by the Priory estates; and the union of the two houses would in virtue of the law respecting the '*feme covert*,' as the wife is legally termed, obviate, by a merging of the two in one, many inconveniences which we at present suffer from."

"Yes, indeed," says the duchess, who thought this all the stronger reason in that she did not the least understand it. "And *do* you think, dear Daisy, that he really loves her?" blandly asked her grace.

"I think and hope, sincerely hope, he *will* do so."

"If I might be allowed to express an opinion on so delicate a subject," said Mr. Terrier, "I

think the marquis has shown more attention to Miss Seabright lately; and indeed, if I may be permitted to use the term, attention of a warmer character."

"In any particular instance?" asked Daisy, forgetting her resolutions in a moment.

"Well, indeed, ladies, it is hardly for me to speak of such things. But——" Mr. Terrier blushed and smiled simultaneously.

"Oh we won't tell," said Daisy, suddenly consumed with curiosity. "Perhaps they are engaged already."

"Nay, nay, I do not believe that, nor in truth would my observations warrant any such inference."

"Let us judge for ourselves, Mr. Terrier. What were your observations?"

"Yes, what were they, Mr. Terrier?" chimed in the duchess.

“Indeed, indeed, ladies, I don’t think I ought to repeat what I was perhaps not intended to hear.”

“Now you have raised our curiosity, you are bound to satisfy it: come tell us. We will not nurse you any more unless you tell us.”

“Well,” said Mr. Terrier, “when they were playing at chess——”

“Where?” said Daisy.

“In the drawing-room: they were near the end of the game, when——”

“Was any one else present?”

“No one but myself. Miss Helen said—certainly with what I should call *empressement* (Mr. T. pronounced the word ‘ongpressmong’)—‘I’ll take you.’”

“Well?”

“‘Well,’ says the marquis, ‘if you take me, I’ll take you.’ I of course moved off at once;

for the position you will admit was one of delicacy."

"I declare," laughed Lady de Crecy, who was as much pleased as entertained, "I declare, Mr. Terrier, I think you must be jealous: no one but a rival would convert the language of the chess-board into a proposition of marriage." Then checking her mirth, "We must hope," she added, "for some more convincing proofs of his attachment. But tell me, Mr. Terrier, you who live at Tramways, and have so many opportunities of judging, how stands Mr. Wharton in the fair Helen's graces? I thought, at one time, he was the accepted, or certainly the favoured, suitor of Miss Seabright."

"Mr. Wharton? oh dear no. To be sure he was, what may be termed, very sweet upon Miss Helen. But I am not aware that there was any



reciprocity on her part. No, no, Wharton is a very worthy man—an excellent man of business—that I must do him the justice to admit, but as to his matrimonial pretensions, why I might as well make Miss Seabright an offer myself, ha! ha!”

Mr. Terrier wished the ladies to confirm this assertion; but they had their own reasons for remaining silent. The duchess was gratified, Lady de Crecy was not equally so, by the information.

## CHAPTER XIV.

ABOUT two o'clock all the ladies, and such of the gentlemen as were not sportsmen, drove to the covert side; where the rest of the party were already collected, and were now busily engaged in preparing luncheon. In front of the entrance to a spacious tent a large pine wood fire was burning down to a heap of serviceable cooking embers. Lord St. Kitts, who positively declined assistance from the attendants, superintended the culinary department; which consisted in heating the soups and stews already prepared in the kitchen, and grilling *ab initio* with a masterly hand a plentiful supply of juicy mutton chops.

“Who’s for Irish stew? Who’s for mulligatawny?” shouted this energetic young *artiste*. “Hot potatoes! all hot, all hot! Here you are. Chop for a lady—underdone? all right. ‘Rich and rare were the gems she wore, and fixed was the glare of her glassy eye.’ What’ll you have yourself, squire? Nothing! *Jejunus raro stomachus vulgaria temnit*, eh? That’s about your tune, I suppose.”

“Nay,” says Mr. Seabright, who was serving the ladies, “you must not call these dainties *vulgaria*; my maxim is *Qua virtus et quanta, boni, sit vivere parvo*: especially when I make an early dinner,” he added with a laugh.

“Lord St. Kitts,” cries Lady Selina from the tent, “will you bring me some Irish stew, please? All the gentlemen but you are busy eating.”

“Stew? in a brace o’ shakes. Fond of onions?”



“ You shouldn’t ask.”

“ Beg pardon. Here you are—a love—sweeter than violets.

‘ She hath no loyal knight and true,  
The Lady of *Shalot*.’”

“ Have you killed more than any one else?”  
Miss Helen asks of Lord Northern.

“ I’ve killed nothing, I believe, but a blackbird ;  
which I mistook for a woodcock.”

“ Dear ! How lackadaisical we are. One would think you were crossed in love,” says the young lady, *sotto voce*. The marquis sidles off to Lady de Crecy.

“ You eat nothing,” he murmurs.

“ I’ve had enough,” said Daisy out loud. “ See, Mrs. Seabright wants her plate changed,” and her ladyship turns to address Mr. Evans.

“ You hit the right nail on the head there,”

said Sir Percy Froth, taking Northern's vacant seat by Miss Nelly's side.

"Eh?" interrogates the young lady with no very encouraging manner.

"I say *you* didn't shoot at the woodcock, and kill the blackbird, ha! ha!"

"I don't quite understand."

"Don't you?" says the colonel. "'Tis pretty evident why his lordship misses the pheasants."

"Why?"

"Because he aims at other game."

"What game?"

"Come, come, Miss Seabright, you'll tell me presently you haven't a pair of eyes of your own. But you can't say," he whispered, "they ain't uncommon bright ones."

"Really, Sir Percy, you are very plain spoken, but at the same time quite unintelligible. If

you intend to shoot any more pheasants I advise you to take less cherry brandy."

"You are mistaken. It sharpens the powers of vision, calms the nerves, steadies the hand, clears the intellect, warms the heart, and rouses the best and tenderest emotions of our nature."

"Sir Percy! Behave yourself, sir."

"There now! You are so unkind. I did but touch your hand, and you shrink as though I were a leper. See there—no, the other way—how much kinder a certain lady of high degree is to that supercilious young marquis, than you are to poor me. Look how he languishes over her. Watch how passionately he devours her with his glances. And I'm sure she's not half so cruel and hard-hearted as you."

"You are mistaken," returned the girl, indignant on her friend's account. "I wish you would go."

“Mistaken? Then you are not hard-hearted? not cruel to me? Is this your meaning, sweet Helen?”

“You are tipsy, sir!” and the young lady turned her back with a look of anger and disgust.

“Ha, ha!” laughed the colonel. “You despise a miserable baronet, do you? Which are you going in for—a duke’s coronet, or a bricklayer’s hod?”

Sir Percy Froth had, as Miss Seabright divined, imbibed just half a glass too much of inspiration; and mastered by the jealousy which had long been stinging him, he inadvertently plunged into hostilities, where he hoped, though desperately, to conquer by diplomacy. And now having drawn the sword (to borrow an expressive metaphor), he resolved to fling away the scabbard. But an hour afterwards he could have bitten his tongue off, for so betraying his temper.

Luncheon ended, the energetic St. Kitts was as eager to renew the shooting, as he had been active at the repast. He got the ladies into their carriages, called the gentlemen to their guns, ordered Boaks to send the beaters to their places, and soon set the party in train for an onward move. Lady de Crecy was seated in her pony phaeton. The duchess was already at her side, Lord Northern seemingly unconscious of the duties which naturally devolved upon him, left St. Kitts to fill the place of leader; and having vainly endeavoured to whisper a few words to Daisy, was listlessly carressing one of the ponies in her carriage. At this instant a rabbit ran across the drive. A shot was fired at it. The ponies started. Lord Northern was knocked down. Both wheels passed over one of his ankles, and by the time the groom had checked the horses, and Lady de Crecy had



looked back, the young man was lying on the ground half-stunned by the shock, and groaning with the pain of his injured foot.

Daisy's first feeling was, that the accident was due to her own careless manner of holding the reins. Terrified and concerned beyond measure, she sprang from the phaeton, and flew to the spot where he lay. No false sense of decorum restrained the demonstration of anxiety. She forgot the presence of all observers, in the alarming condition of the prostrate sufferer. She threw herself upon her knees in the mud, raised Lord Northern's head between her hands, and implored him, in tones which betrayed her anguish, to speak or show some sign of life. Her voice and touch seemed instantly to chase away the sense of pain. He looked up into her face and smiled, as though the situation filled him with delicious ease. But


some kind friend began to lift him ; and the injured joint getting a twist, the sharp pang speedily remedied itself by a fit of anæsthesia. Fifty restoratives were at once suggested by the bystanders, who were now gathered in a throng around the fainting youth. " Raise his head," says one. " Lay him flat," shouts another. " Water, water," cries Lady de Crecy. " Give him a good stiff glass of grog," bawls the admiral. " Better send for the doctor," suggests Mr. Seabright. " Or rather take him there," says Mr. Evans, " and move him into the carriage at once before he has time to recover his senses."

As this seemed on the whole the best advice, it was adopted ; and fortunately the marquis was more than half-way home before his consciousness returned.

What are bodily pangs when weighed with


mental? They are as feathers in the scale. How many wretched beings put themselves out of the world they can no longer endure to live in? Yet scarcely one of them, perhaps, for his mere body's sufferings. The martyr at the stake accompanies his imaginary flight to heaven with tuneful hymns. And so long as there are Heros, Leanders will not be wanting.

Lord Northern had received a severe injury. His ankle was dislocated; the interior of the joint much bruised; inflammation had set in; and for many days and nights he hardly got an hour's rest. But would he have bought off these evils at the price of separation from her of whose incessant mindfulness of his smallest want he was receiving incessant proofs? Not he. He revelled in his misfortune. A shake of the doctor's head meant another week at Tinselby. A sleepless night



brought its consolation in the shape of a thousand delicious visions of the oriflamme, round which his ardent fancies rallied. Ah! it was too bad of the Inconstant and Blindfold Goddess thus to roll her wheel over this young man's instep. What havoc was she not working—not with legs and ankles only, but with passions which, sometimes forsooth, associate themselves with these. After all poor Daisy's excellent resolves too; when temptation was actually conquered; when victory was won; when trial was at end. It seemed as if fate itself were bent on her destruction: as if 'twere useless to wrestle against her destiny. How subtly the arch-tempter—Cupid—assailed her now! The young scamp soon discovered how vulnerable the sweet creature was on the side of pity. He incited her to a thousand little acts of tender care, every one of which inflamed

the wounds his poisonous darts were hourly inflicting. He it was who taught the unsuspecting Daisy to sweeten the youth's gruel with her own taper fingers; to give Mrs. Tucker five hundred orders a day about the sick-room and its tenant; whom she would have bartered the whole planetary system to have the right—the legal right—of visiting as often as she longed to do. And what else was it prompted her to such marked and sudden veneration for the worthy Dr. Crick? Did she not treat him with much greater attention than she would have showed to a royal prince? And would she have done so, think you—would she have made love to him, and have called him her “dear doctor,” had he been attending my lord De Crecy—say? H'm—We have our doubts upon the subject. But I am confident this young woman never asked the learned doctor half so



many questions about the viscount's gout, as she asked about the marquis' bruise : nor indeed ever thoroughly understood about the articulations of the metatarsus, until the learned practitioner kindly made them clear to her. Then, too, on the night after the accident, I verily believe she actually left her warm bed to listen, in the drafty passage, for the groans of the poor fellow whom she had nearly "murdered." But was she to be blamed for this? Was it then her duty to neglect him? Was she bound to feel indifference? Or was it not incumbent on her, as a woman and a Christian, to tend the sick; and administer the oil and wine herself?

These and similar nice questions of casuistry puzzled her sorely now and then. How often in the twenty-four hours, for instance, was it her duty to inquire in person after the young man's


wound? How long was it right to stay at each visit? If he were ordered to keep his bed, was it necessary that she should wait until he was allowed to use the sofa? What was the moral distinction between a bed and a sofa? If Mrs. Tucker, who was a spinster, superintended the dressing of the Marquis of Northern's foot, why should there be impropriety in her doing so? If Mr. Terrier's foot had been wounded instead of his hand, would she have asked herself all these questions? She thought not: and so do we. But you see, this dear lady's conscience was mightily thin skinned; so she vexed herself with doubts, and with restrictions which the doubts imposed upon her. She refrained from a multitude of little actions perfectly innocent in themselves, which probably she never would have hesitated to perform but for certain references she was for

ever making to that unlucky incident in the greenhouse. As it was, nothing on earth would have induced her to visit the invalid alone. Sometimes she went in with Dr. Crick ; sometimes with the duchess or the nurse ; or when she knew that other visitors were in the room. But the worst of all this was, the more she kept away—the more she restrained herself from seeing the patient, the more both she and the patient cursed the restraint, and longed for its removal. So it fell out, that the accident, by degrees, made matters worse than they were before. And the inflammation of poor Daisy's heart increased, as that of the marquis' leg subsided.

There were no such obstacles as these to hinder the Duchess of Midland's visit to her son. There were but few hours out of the twenty-four that the fond mother was absent from the bed-side of



her boy. And what hand can smooth the sufferer's pillow more gently than a mother's? Some ancient sage philosopher (was it Gray?) has shrewdly observed that we have but one such relative. The implication thus attached to all beings excluded by the term—mother, may not be flattering; but the truth is undeniable. As to friends, we have either legions or none, according, generally, to our deserts. Wives or husbands, in many countries, are left to discretion: the only restriction here is, one at a time. Children will, in any case, depend on circumstances. And as to fathers, is it not a wise man who knows his own? But the mother—true, O sage! we have but one. When she is gone, do any of us find another? Sometimes, however, like the air we breathe, we take but little notice of the luxury until deprived of it. North-ern's mother, like other mothers, had watched so



many times over his bed, from the days when that bed measured about three feet nothing, that he had got used to seeing her loving face there ; and thought no more of calling for, or dismissing its light, than he did of ordering the window-blinds to be drawn up or down. But what other remuneration do these faithful watchers get or ask, as a rule, than to be allowed to watch ? The Duchess of Midland was quite content with this lucrative honorarium. And her son, I own, was nearly as selfish as any reasonable mother could desire. This one would write letters for him till her poor old fingers ached. She would read to him till her poor old eyes grew dim. And when the day closed in, and she could write and read no more, she—oh that wicked mother ! she allowed her boy to talk to her about Daisy de Crecy ; allowed, and I sadly fear encouraged, him to tell

her how miserably he was in love with another man's wife.

“ But Nordy darling,” she would say, looking up from her knitting with eyes too moist to count the stitches, “ can't you forget her, dear ? can't you try ? ”

“ Forget her, mother ! What's the use of talking to me like that ? You know I cannot. You know I never shall, as long as I breathe. Don't you now ? ”

“ Well, yes, dear Nordy ; but then it cannot be, it cannot be ; it is so very, very wrong, dear.”

“ Wrong ! Good God ! mother, which is most wrong, I should like to know, to marry her as De Crecy did, or to love her as I do ? Was she not mine—mine in the highest sense, by the sacred pledges of true and holy love, long enough before that profligate old beast seduced her ? ”



“Hush! dear, hush!”

“Well, what else was it but seduction? Didn’t he use every kind of hypocrisy and cant to beguile her? Didn’t he make her believe he was a saint, and I the most debauched of rakes? If she had been anything less than a saint herself, she would never have believed in such a scoundrel, by Jove!”

What arguments had the simple dame to oppose to the impetuosity of the lawless young sophist? She could say nothing in detraction of the object of his passion. She was as fond of Daisy as she was of her own daughter; indeed, if she had only known it, fonder. It had been a dreadful blow to the duchess when Lord de Crecy’s marriage was announced. She had always looked upon Lady Daisy Lea’s union with her son as a certainty. Lady Selina was a long time winning

her mother over to the scheme of marrying Northern to Miss Helen Seabright; and strongly as the duchess advocated that match now, for its moral recommendations, had there been no such invention as morality, I would not say what she might have wished for.

But Lady Selina was always watchful for the welfare—the spiritual welfare, of others. Nor did she neglect the present occasion, to impress upon her brother's mind, how a warning voice had now summoned him through the blessed visitation of pain and sickness, to the paths of peace and righteousness. Many beautiful passages did she cite to him on the sinfulness of seeking pleasure in this world. Most eloquently did she set before him the sublime religious principle of sacrificing the transient joys of this life, to secure infinite bliss in perpetuity. She read to him (may he



have digested them) several of Dr. Howlit's delightful discourses from his celebrated "Abomination of Desolation." She gave him many little tracts to peruse in her absence, instancing miraculous cases of conversion brought about by accidents similar to his own. And ever when she left him, this excellent young woman devoutly thanked Heaven for the charge it had graciously vouchsafed to her care; and meekly shed a congratulatory tear over the prospects of her own salvation.

These somewhat depressing interviews with his sister, were relieved by the society of plenty of other visitors. For the week or so during which the Marquis of Northern was confined to his own apartments, a levee was daily held there by such of his friends as were really glad to see him. The duke and Mr. Terrier would sit by the hour, and

consult him about the business of the estates. Mr. Evans would come and chat with him ; nor was there any one of the party whom the invalid took more pleasure in receiving. For besides the agreeableness of this gentleman's conversation, his intimacy with, and attachment to, Lady de Crecy, made him particularly welcome to Lord Northern. Now and again the latter had been on the point of making a confidant of him. He longed for some friend to whom he could pour out his passion : and there was a shrewdness and a reticence about Evans that fitted him pre-eminently for the trust, and invited confidential communications in this case, just as the same qualities and the same accidental considerations had half tempted Lady de Crecy, once before, to convert this common friend into a confessor. With her, the extreme delicacy of the subject, and the consciousness of Evans'

secret admiration, rendered the scheme practically impossible. But with Northern the matter was different. There was every reason for consulting Evans, and nothing but pride or shyness prevented his speaking. As yet however, the moment had not arrived for this.

Meanwhile others helped to relieve the monotony of confinement. Seabright, who was a great friend of Dr. Crick's, often sought the doctor in the young man's chamber; where Northern incited the two philosophers to the fiercest disputes on psychological pathology; sometimes siding with one, sometimes with the other, partly from his own interest in the discussion, partly from the entertainment it afforded him to see these otherwise placid and amiable men excite themselves to the highest pitch of mutual contempt and animosity.



Sir Percy Froth was not a constant occupant of the lame man's room; but the admiral came and spun endless yarns. As to St. Kitts, not a day passed but the good-natured fellow went and "cheered the old boy up," as he said. Through him, Northern heard all the gossip, local and general. Through him he learnt full particulars of the baronet's little affair with Miss Seabright: how Sir Percy had imbibed rather too freely of certain cordials, and had first made love, and finally made war; how disgusted the baronet was with his own conduct afterwards; and how abjectly he had atoned for his offence.

"You don't mean to say," cries Northern, with a hearty laugh, "that Froth confided all these follies to your faithful bosom, St. Kitts?"

"Well, he isn't fond of writing himself down an ass, I know; but you see I twigged him in the



act. Poor old Percy ! I can't help laughing ; there he was, on his knees to the lovely Helen : she looking as petrifying as Medusa."

"Was he in earnest then, do you suppose ? Does he really want to marry the girl ?"

"*Quién sabe !* He's so plaguy deep, is Percy. I should have thought he might be eager to annex coin ; but he assured me some time ago the pewter was all tied up in Mortgage."

"Ha, ha ! you don't believe all he tells you, do you ? He was afraid *you* might be making a bid for the heiress. Bless you ! I know the beggar's little game. He has been up to it ever so long. He hated Wharton because he fancied *he* was in his way : he hated——"


"I suppose she *was* rather saccharine on Wharton, wasn't she ?"

"Nelly ? Lor ! not she. Though, hang me !

if I wouldn't sooner see her married to him than to any of 'em. No," said the marquis, with a sigh (he was thinking, no doubt, how misplaced were her affections), "I'm afraid she doesn't care much for Wharton."

"Perhaps, old chap, you know whom she *does* care for!" St. Kitts closed one eye by way of intimating that *he* had a pretty shrewd guess.

Lord Northern, though not without a blush, denied the implication. "I know," said he, "Froth thinks that I stand in his way; and hates me accordingly. But he is jealous of everybody, the donkey! even of poor little Terrier, who has about as much chance of getting her as Tartlett, or any other of the five hundred muffs who periodically offer to spend her fortune for her. I hope you chaffed Froth on the humiliating posture in which you found him."




“Didn’t I just! I told him I was afraid the lady was too insensible of the honour he was doing her. And advised him to

‘Crouch no more on suppliant knee,  
But scorn with scorn outbrave.  
A Briton, even in love, should be  
A *tyrant*, not a slave.’

‘Egad!’ cried Percy, ‘you’re right, my boy. But they say if you want to rule, you must first learn to serve.’ By Jingo! I pity the girl who takes Froth into her service. Though the chances are she wouldn’t see much of him three weeks after marriage.”


## CHAPTER XV.

AND what view did the subject of these speculations take of her own affairs? it may be asked. Had Miss Seabright quite got over her indignation with Wharton for the warnings which she had so unluckily misapplied? or did the offence still rankle in her bosom? Perhaps gentler feelings, and those too centred round another object, were tending to exclude all recollection of her devoted engineer. Who can tell? When the print is small, and the carriage shaking, the best of eyes cannot read the text. There are some little hearts that go pit-a-pat, now with one little



passion, now with another, till, deuce take it! if one can tell what they mean. The chances are Miss Nelly did not know herself. It is possible, if she had known more definitively what the Marquis of Northern intended, she might have had a clearer notion of her own intentions. She was not heartless; she was not a flirt. She did not encourage Sir Percy Froth; she did not trifle with Mr. Terrier. She snubbed Mr. Tartlett, and she did not even try to make St. Kitts unhappy. In her own way—to be sure this was not the most violent of ways—she loved Wharton; and had Northern been as much in love with her as Wharton was, she would certainly have loved him too. Have you never divided your affections in this way, gentle reader? Have Captain Macheath's cheerful sentiments never found an echo in your manly bosom? Well, well! We must not

blame the girl for her affection to her old playmate. His brilliant position, his personal advantages, his masculine character, his talents, his amiability, were enough in themselves to fascinate any woman. And besides these there was the natural liking which had sprung out of their childhood's intimacy. Who then can accuse her of *legèreté* or vacillation, if she was ready to pick up such jewels, should she at any time find them at her feet? Nevertheless she knew how devotedly the engineer was attached to her. She could not but admire his character also. There was a solidity about it, which a certain lightness in her own nature instinctively prompted her to value at its worth. There was (alas! for the sake of sentiment that worldly wisdom should have a voice in such matters) so much uncertainty about Northern, that, as yet, it would be recklessness to cast away the



other. And although, in one sense, the certainty she felt respecting Wharton was not without its sedative effect, the ambition of her mother was likely to prove so strong an obstacle to this match, that the difficulty partly counterbalanced the ease. A zest was therefore given to that prospect, which in the absence of other motives might operate with considerable force.

With facile dispositions like Miss Seabright's, which accommodate themselves readily to circumstances, the external influence for the time being, whatever it may be, is always potent in its effect. Of course, no one is unmoved by outward surroundings (women less so than men), but the difference of their weight upon natures like Nelly Seabright's and Lady de Crecy's, for example, is immense. Vain and intensely fond of admiration, Daisy was keenly susceptible to every contact



which, however remotely, reflected praise or dispraise upon her sensitive consciousness. Yet, however much her behaviour—her manner, rather—was affected for the moment, there were recesses in her nature, deep reservoirs of strong feeling and fixed principle, which the commotion at the surface never reached. Nelly, on the other hand, though less easily disturbed superficially, had no such depths within her; and was a hundred times more readily turned from any purpose. And though perhaps more confident of her own firmness than Lady de Crecy was of hers, would follow a lead from without or within, not the least aware that she was either yielding or impelled.

While Lord Northern was laid up, Miss Seabright saw nothing of him. There was no plea for her entering the young man's chamber. In the meantime she enjoyed herself as usual: re-

ceived abundant homage from all the gentlemen : and however she might have missed him, certainly did not pine for her friend's society. It was during this week of the marquis' seclusion that she received the following letter from Miss Mumford :—

“ MY DEAR HELEN,

“ It must be admitted that this response to yours of the 15th ultimo is somewhat tardy. The best excuse I am able to plead is ill health. I have been suffering this good while from an unusually sharp attack of siatics. And though the complaint is at present alleviated by the careful regimen I have kept, it has left me but a poor creature, and with little stomach either to the task of writing, or any other fatigue. Your letter is full of spirits ; and the animated description it set forth of the doings at Tinselby helped not a little to break the monotony of my secluded life. For though I am past active participation in the world's frolics, I am not too old, and please God never shall be,


to relish at secondhand the enjoyment of them by the young.

“ Much however as it diverted me to receive the particulars of your merry-makings, there were I confess passages in the letter which did not afford me the same unmixed satisfaction. The candour with which you refer to Mr. Wharton justifies some freedom of speech in me. I must say then that I am truly concerned at the offence which this very worthy young man seems to have given you by his strictures on the character of Sir P. F., neither will I conceal from you, my dear, how vexed I am by your warm defence of that person ; whom I had hitherto considered you as quite indifferent to. For my own part I can discern no parity between the two ; so vastly superior in my eyes does one appear to the other. And were I in your place, or of an age to think of such things, I should certainly not choose my beau as you seem to have chosen. It is not necessary for me to express on this occasion my opinion of a man whom I could never bring myself to tolerate. But with regard to Wharton, you are well aware that I always admired his

great abilities, his sound judgment, and his sterling probity of character : and though he may not give himself the airs of a fine gentleman, I certainly consider him fully as genteel as *some* who do. The whimsies of taste however are past accounting for : and if 'tis true, as you say, that you have a real liking for Sir P. I can only pray you may not be disappointed in your choice. If however the warmth of your praises of him spring partly out of pique to Mr. W. (which I am not altogether out of hopes may be the case), it is then not too late for me to caution you with some words of friendly advice. As an old woman, and one who has loved you from your infancy, I claim this privilege. And though the admonition I am about to offer implies the belief that it is needed, I know enough of your affectionate disposition not to fear that you will take umbrage at my remarks. .

“ And now, my dear, you are young, you are favoured in looks, and you will be rich. Any one of these conditions would subject you to peculiar trials. The union of the three renders you specially liable to danger. With respect to your youth and your beauty (what I

say to you, mind! I would say to any girl in the like position), these two qualities are sure to procure you admiration—not the less dangerous because sincere. Fortunately for you, my dear, you are not so vain as many. But every woman loves to be admired; and every woman's greatest danger approaches her under the mask of admiration. There is no man who has had any experience of our sex but knows this point of our weakness; and whether his intents be honest or otherwise, it is through our vanity that the road to conquest lies. Now too many women (to their shame be it spoken) go such lengths to gratify this passion that they seek it at the expense of modesty; and crave admiration even when they care nothing for the admirer. Men soon find them out. If they do possess beauty they are surrounded by followers: but it is not to seek a wife that men court their society. It is on the contrary with such designs as the woman's own conduct has suggested; and she—silly fool—may lose her head by flattery, which in reality means nothing but the man's estimate of her wanton character. I may pity but cannot defend the woman who pays the



penalty of her folly by misery and remorse. For no woman was ever ruined except by her own collusion. No profligate, however abandoned, wastes his wiles on genuine modesty. True Virtue, like Ithuriel's spear, detects these venomous reptiles. They shrink from contact with it as the toad shuns light.

“ My love, when I write in this strain I am moved to spleen by the thought of those who may surround you. So do not resent these cautions as though they reflected solely upon yourself.

“ To come now to your prospects of a fortune. I would not have you think because I bid you listen to all admirers with diffidence and reserve, that all men merit nothing but suspicion. There are some (I need not name them), whom both of us know, of the highest integrity, of the noblest natures. But, as I was going to say, the heiress who unfortunately fancies her money to be the sole attraction about her, often poisons her own mind with error, flings away her happiness, and does grievous wrong to an honest man. You are too intelligent, my dear Helen, to need that I should strengthen these observations by particular

instances. I only hope your good sense may render the remarks themselves as little needful as their application.

“Your most affectionate friend,

“L. MUMFORD.”

“P.S. Is anything settled about your going to Town before Easter?”

This severe epistle, which the worthy old maid had written under the influence of disappointment, mingled with indignation at the young lady's supposed inconstancy, called forth this rejoinder :—

“Well I never! What can your dear old head have been dreaming of to think I deserved such a jobation? and all for nothing too! If I wasn't just about the best tempered being in the world I should be furious, and scold you worse than you do me for being so silly. Yes, silly, you dear old thing, as to make such an absurd hash of my letter, and misunderstand every word I wrote in it. How could you imagine I was alluding to that odious creature Sir Percy Froth? A

real regard for *him* indeed! Yes, I should think so! I can't help laughing to think you should have worked yourself up to such a pitch in the notion that I had fallen over head and ears in love with a man like *that*. I fancy I see myself Lady Froth! No thank you. I flatter myself (you say I mustn't allow any one else to flatter me) that I am not quite brought to such 'reduced circumstances' yet. Why, it was Northern of course I meant. And how on earth you could suppose it was anybody else, beats me hollow. I forget what I wrote now, but surely I must have mentioned his name. And how was I to know that W. meant Sir Percy and not Northern the whole time? Didn't he say ever so much about his rank and his ancestors, and what a swell he was, and all that sort of rubbish? Of course I thought at once he meant Northern. No one would ever think of talking of Col. Froth like that. But my dear beloved Miss Mumford, I *do* hope you did not go and tell H. W. that I had not only told you how angry I was with him, but also that I had confessed my attachment to Sir Percy. This would be *too* horrible, especially as now you know how very



untrue such a statement would be. Of course I forgive W. now I see who he alluded to. And am sorry I did him the injustice to think *otherwise*. Only I must say it was his own fault for speaking of Col. Froth as a *rival*, which I *assure* you he *never* could be. Indeed you know well enough what I feel about H., and ought never to be afraid of anything of the *kind*; though this I need not say is in the strictest confidence, and must not be repeated to *any one*.

“And now, my dear friend, I think you will see that I was not quite in such need of all your fine advice about the dangers to my youth and beauty as you imagined. I thoroughly appreciate (is this the right number of p's?) the wisdom of your remarks; though who Ithuriel was is rather beyond me even now. I asked papa about him, and he says he was an angel. Whether this is chaff or not goodness knows. But if an angel he be, only fancy my looking the party up in a ‘Biographie Universelle!’ I naturally thought he might be an ancient Roman at the least. But as to my fortune, and who to believe and not believe, you may well talk of the difficulty of that. I should say, on a moderate

computation, every unmarried man in this and the adjoining counties, irrespective of age or anything else, has done me the honour to propose. . One can't accept them all, so I go on the other principle. Seriously, I confess it would be a satisfaction to *feel* it was oneself and not one's money that was wanted. But unless one has the luck to meet with *one* to whom money is no object, this isn't so easy as you may think for.

“ I have spun out such a long letter that I have no time to tell you any news—except about Northern's accident, and the row between the two gentlemen; which the duchess told me she had written you a full account of. So I need add no more, only that Northern is now nearly well, and is to come downstairs in a day or two, which I for one am right glad of. For he is a great loss to the party, independent of my being *too* sorry for his misfortune. By the way, as to London, we shall probably go to an hotel *before* Easter, as mama says we are *too* poor this year to take a house for the whole season. And pappy as usual (when he doesn't care) does as he is told. Good-bye. Do not

scold me any more till I deserve it. And believe me  
your most loving

“NELLY.”

The light-hearted writer of the above was not, as we may observe, deficient in discretion. She had paid out enough line to give the fish already hooked plenty of play. It would be time enough to break with him when she had the option of a better. Miss Mumford was delighted with this answer to her reprimand. The avowals which the young lady had made in the ‘strictest confidence’ were reassuring in the highest degree; in fact they said, as plain as words could, that she always meant to take Wharton, and would adhere to that intention. The old maid did not lose a single post in communicating the joyful news to the distant lover. She did not send him the original document you may be sure. In the first place, she

never showed to any one a single line of a letter addressed to herself. Under no pressure of curiosity was she known to break through this rule. Secondly, she would not have deemed it advisable to run any risks by submitting a composition of the kind to a person whose judgment she revered so much as Wharton's. In Miss Mumford's youthful days it was not the fashion to be 'slang.' Young women did not think it enhanced their powers of captivation either to dress or to talk like young men. The old lady therefore was very careful of her sentences ; and was punctilious in her style of writing as she was in demeanour and all her notions of propriety.

But if she did not forward Miss Helen's letter she culled its choicest flowers. And the heart of the enraptured engineer glowed, as he inhaled their fragrance, with renewed admiration of the peerless

creature who condescended thus to speak of him. He had nobody, he needed nobody, to whom he could say "Was there ever such an angel! To think that she should be in love with me!" But if he breathed the divine name in the dumb solitudes of the woods only, his glad emotions found vent in his extra kindness to old Spilman. With him the costly sacrifice was made to Venus Epistrophia. Plentiful libations of the ruddy wine were poured forth on these occasions to the propitious goddess. Rich viands strewed the plate of the frugal language master: and rejoicings now, and visceral derangements for a week to come, solemnized the advent of these welcome tidings.

## CHAPTER XV.

THE self-sufficing Wharton had disciplined his character to keep even the strongest emotions within control. But if he could dispense with the luxury of sympathy—so delightful to every lover—our noble friend Lord Northern had never learnt to bear his troubles with such stoicism. Indeed from the hour of this nobleman's birth, it had been his custom (and the whole world encouraged him in it) to acquaint others with his misfortunes, and on all occasions to make demands upon their active sympathy.

The opportunity he had long been seeking to

confide in Evans, at last offered itself. The following conversation, which led up to it, took place in the marquis' bedchamber.

“In one sense,” said Lord Northern, “it was lucky, as you say, that the accident was no worse. But the thought has crossed me many times, while lying on this sofa, that had the wheel dislocated my neck instead of my ankle, it would have been better for me, and for others too.”

“Ah,” returned Evans, caustically, “you are hipped by confinement and inaction. A gallop across country, a debate in the House of Commons, or a couple of grains of blue pill, will set you right again.”

“Right! I am never right, my dear Evans. You don't know what a miserable fellow I am.”

“And whose fault is that, pray, if not your own! With the world at your feet, you have

nothing to do but set it rolling in any direction you please."

"Bah! This is just my misfortune. What are called the advantages of wealth and position, have few illusions for those who have always possessed them. Of course it is very pleasant to be toadied; but the penalty of doubting the sincerity of one's friends sometimes more than counterbalances the enjoyment. To others, ambition affords an outlet for superfluous energy. The field is wide enough for mine, you will tell me: I know it is so. But a man in my position is feebly spurred by the common inducements to distinction; and the higher motives—patriotism, or benevolence—are, I take it, oftener the outgrowths of self-seeking than spontaneous effusions of our nature. One cannot derive an impulse from a motive one despises: hence I



fail to attain the height I might otherwise aspire to."

"But why should distinction, which you affect to look down upon, be despicable in kind? All self-seeking motives are not necessarily selfish or ignoble. An action performed for the integrity of one's own character is self-regarding, but certainly not contemptible. The distinction awarded to noble deeds will confer a pleasure on the doer of them, as pure as man can feel. The position you are disposed to quarrel with affords occasions for the exercise of your worthiest efforts: a really benevolent man would soon turn them to the happiest account. No man like you ought to be unhappy. Human beings, with very few exceptions, are compelled to toil for a small share only of the luxuries which you command in superfluity. From all the pains incident to

poverty (and they are countless) you are exceptionally exempt. Are your sympathies roused by individual want, you can gratify them with ease: if they extend to the infelicity of your fellow-creatures in general, your station lends immense weight to your efforts in their behalf. You have health, good abilities, some cultivation, youth and good looks. What more a man needs to make him contented, the gods themselves would be puzzled to divine, or bestow."

"And yet," sighed Northern, "I am miserable. All the possessions you have enumerated seem worthless in my eyes compared with one object, which, alas! I never can possess."

"If that be a certainty," said Evans, drily, "the sooner you cease to desire that one object the better. If circumstances will not yield to us, there's nothing for it but to yield to circumstances."

“I have endeavoured to do so,” said Northern, with a choking voice. “I have striven with all my might: but it is useless. I have tried every thing: I have tried solitude, and I have tried excitement: whatever I do leaves me worse than I was before.”

“My dear Northern,” said Evans, laying his hand in a friendly manner on the young man’s shoulder, “permit me to read you a bit of a lecture. You have used the word ‘excitement’: did it ever occur to you, that what you have tried as an antidote has been the bane of your existence? Like thousands of others—from the venerable Ecclesiastes downwards—you have been deluded with the notion, that life should be a continual state of rapture. Your sole business hitherto has been to find some delight which you had not yet exhausted. Hunting, shooting,

racing, yachting, travelling, gaming, and other little amusements, which shall be nameless, have each been tried and flung aside in turn. Excitement, perpetual excitement, is the only state which makes life tolerable to you. Now, I should be quite of your opinion that incessant bliss—uninterrupted ecstasy—would be worth pursuing, were it but attainable: not being so, it is best to take the fact for granted. You, on the contrary, insist on verifying the truism by experiments upon yourself. The fact is (excuse my mentioning it), it is simply waste of labour to concentrate one's energies on one's own happiness: like you, I have given the theory a thorough trial; but abandoned the attempt at last as hopeless. Curiously enough, from that time I ceased to be unhappy."

"In plain language," said Northern, "you believe I am miserable because I am selfish?"

“Precisely so.”

“Flattering, certainly! In what way selfish?”

“By making the most charming woman in the world miserable, through the most reckless attempts to make yourself happy.”

Northern bit his lips, and for a minute or so made no reply. “You are mistaken,” he presently replied, “her happiness is dearer to me than life.”

“Then why do your utmost to destroy it?”

“Were she mine, she would be happier than she is now.”

“Idle sophistry! Were Lord de Crecy’s wife your mistress, all the misery you have felt in working such a change would be pleasure compared with her agony at its achievement.”

“She would be my wife.”

“And the world’s outcast!”



“She is too proud to care for the world’s opinion.”

“Tut man! never believe it. She is more vain than proud—vain as every charming woman is, and ought to be vain, delighting in the approbation of others, and hence always striving to give pleasure: no nature so full of tenderness, so sympathetic and sensitive as hers, can be otherwise than vain in such a sense. The complacency, which you mistake for pride, would not uphold her for a second. Were she to stain her pure conscience, her pretty arrogance—her engaging egotism, would be crushed for ever. The act you contemplate would bring that queenly soul to grovel in the dust. Whatever pride she has would only serve to make her ruin and her misery complete. Look you, Northern, I have some regard for you, but a good deal more for her; and

I would sooner stand by, and see you strike her dead, than have you commit a crime which would bring her to her grave by slow torment."

There was a pause.

"Come," said Evans, breaking it, "take a friend's advice. Be a man. Give up Lady de Crecy, and marry Helen Seabright."

"What! Marry—marry Helen Seabright! Ha! ha! ha!" And the young fellow's bitter guffaw reached all the way to Daisy's boudoir; and made her wonder what the joke could be.

"Perhaps it is Mr. Evans," thought she, "he said he was to be there at four. Perhaps Crick is there too. I want to see the doctor about the old man at the almshouses. I'll just send Tucker to find out who is in the room."

Mrs. Tucker came back to report that his lordship was conversing with Mr. Evans. Lady de

Crecy had not seen Lord Northern for two days—two long days. She only visited him in company with others. Evans' presence would enable her to do so now. Before she went she glanced at the looking-glass to ascertain how much of her heart's inquietude was visible in her face. She had also to finish and seal a letter to her sister. These things occupied a couple of minutes or more; meanwhile Evans was gone.

When Lady de Crecy had knocked at the marquis' door, and was admitted, she perceived to her alarm that she had fallen into a snare, which the powers of darkness themselves must have laid for her. To retreat directly that she found herself alone with Lord Northern would have betrayed such an avowal of her own weakness, such an implication of guilty purpose somewhere, that she instantly resolved to face her situation.



“I thought,” said she, forgetting the strict truth in the midst of her perplexity, “I thought that Dr. Crick was with you. I wanted particularly to see him about an old man in the almshouses.”

“I expect him every minute,” said Northern, who expected nothing of the kind. “It is already past his time. He is sure to be punctual. But his visits now are purely matter of form. I have his permission to go downstairs to-morrow. You see I can walk quite well.” And to prove his words the speaker changed his seat for one by Lady de Crecy.

“I am thankful to see that your recovery is so complete. I should never have forgiven myself had I been the cause of a life-long misfortune to you.”

“Shouldn't you?” said Northern, mechanically. He was not thinking of himself; he was think-

ing how beautiful and how agitated Daisy looked. "I meant to go down this evening," he added, "if you had not come here. The last two days have been terribly long to me."

"I couldn't see you yesterday, I was engaged from morning till night," apologized the lady.

"And from night till morning I was thinking what you could be engaged in."

Lady de Crecy rose.

"Oh! do not go," pleaded the youth. "I am not going to offend you."

"Northern," said Daisy, as she stood in front of him, "since that dreadful morning of your accident, I have never had the heart, I have never had the courage, to speak to you as I should have spoken had that accident not happened. I will not now upbraid you for your conduct: upon me it has left a stain that can never be effaced. I

blame myself alone. You and I ought never to have met again—least of all under my husband's roof—until years had obliterated the unfortunate illusions of our youth. That we were both overcome by temptation in an unguarded moment, proves too surely how little dependence can be place in resolutions, where hearts are so weak as ours."

"Then you do love me! you do love me!" exclaimed Lord Northern, springing towards the speaker and wildly attempting to clasp her hand.

"Do not mistake me, Northern. If I am truthful enough to confess to you the weakness I was for a passing instant guilty of, it is to convince you how deeply humiliating I have since felt that weakness to be; it is to convince you how thoroughly aware I am of my own danger; how resolute I am to guard myself henceforth from

the risks which my own frailty and this occurrence have so sharply impressed upon me. Yes, Northern!" her voice softened, and her tears began to flow; "it would be futile to conceal from you by falsehood what you have too long known for truth. But, dear Northern! let us no longer be to each other a source of perpetual trial, sorrow, and temptation; let us be brother and sister; and love each other, as we may love—with pure affection. Let us be one in the holy struggle for virtue. Each will bear their lot more patiently, knowing that it is shared by both. What need have we to repeat assurances of the sacred tie which may for ever subsist between us? Time can never break the bond; it will only bring us nearer to that true union of our spirits, which now and here we have begun. Let us help each other, dear friend, to win the only happiness that can last.

Let us wish, and do, what is right. God, who knows our struggles, will reward them.”

Sadly smiling through her tears, Lady de Crecy then held out both her hands as if to take a final leave of her lover. At first the young marquis took no notice of her action. He stood as if rooted to the spot, his arms hanging by his side, his head drooping upon his breast. The pain of hopeless conviction sent its depressing shock through his entire system. Suddenly, as her noble sentiments touched a sympathetic chord, a flow of generous feeling responded to Virtue's summons.

“Yes!” he exclaimed, seizing her outstretched hands, “it shall be so! Your words have dispelled the sweetest fantasy that ever beguiled the heart of man. But the pure happiness of the angels shall be yours. And in the desolation

which awaits me, one blessed thought will yet sustain my spirit—I was beloved by Daisy.” Lady de Crecy glided from the room, and the young marquis sank upon his knees, buried his face in his hands, and sobbed in the utmost bitterness of despair.

When sanguine and impetuous characters like Lord Northern’s find their hopes suddenly withered, and all the brilliant schemes, on which they have long feasted their imagination, shattered at a blow, the violence of their collision with adverse fortune is of course measured by the momentum with which they run their heads against it. But the intensity of suffering which ensues is often a remedy to the wounds. Pain may be just sharp enough to paralyze volition: increased by a few degrees it again becomes a powerful stimulus to action. The state of hope-

lessness to which Northern was reduced, the absolute certainty, which had now been thrust upon him, that Daisy de Crecy could not and would not be his, were facts so poignantly galling that unconsciously he began at once to cast about for some loophole by which to escape from their annoyance. He thought again and again of her exhortation to Duty; and his mind catching something of the enthusiasm of the beautiful preacher who had just stood before him, he felt for the moment equal to the most heroic feats of virtuous daring. But, alas, this attitude of mind was sadly uncongenial to him; and when he considered how much this same love of virtue would cost, his ardour to become a devotee speedily abated. Then it was the old symptoms began again to show themselves. He would tear his hair and fume about the room, ready to swear she

should be his in spite of spite. But it was no use raving. His better judgment told him that although he had had his own way, pretty much all his life, by stamping and raving for it when it was not otherwise to be come at, in this particular instance he had met with a will that matched his own. He might as well try to swim up Niagara as hope to surmount the obstacles to his passionate desire.

Then he pondered over what Evans had said to him. There was but little comfort to be got from that. The burden of his friend's admonitions was charged with the same discouraging tone of morality, which, turn whither he would, balked his violent ambition. The worldly wisdom of Evans, his hatred of cant, the purely practical tendency of his moral creed, gave painful importance to his remonstrance. The notion that he—Northern—



could carry off Lord de Crecy's wife, obtain a separation at the hands of the judge in ordinary, and legally claim Daisy as his own, was (if Evans were right) a sheer piece of selfish infatuation; the only sure consequence of which would be, to make her and himself miserable for life. The concluding utterance of his friend rose before him for the first time as a bit of advice which might possibly, under these distressing circumstances, be worthy of contemplation. What if he should marry Helen Seabright? In his present frame of mind the distant future held out no soothing prospects. If immediate relief were only to be found, he was ready to clutch at it with avidity. The thought of engaging himself straight away to Helen contained at once the excitement of a rash act, and the calming influence of a prudential one. He summoned her image before his mind's eye:

and outwardly that image was not without attractions. He reflected on her character, and felt that if this was only negatively pleasing, in taking her to his wife he would, at any rate, be secure against a thousand possible dangers, from which he could never guard himself except by such long and perfect intimacy as he had enjoyed with her. Then came the question—Would she accept him? The very doubt was agreeable to his present morbid state. He actually caressed the notion of a difficulty: looked about him eagerly for a rival. Froth, Wharton, St. Kitts, Terrier, all were in love with Helen Seabright; all stood in his way: even the poor curate Tartlett gave a zest to his present purpose. The more he dwelt on Helen's charms the easier it became to create a fictitious barrier to his own possession of them. And flying from one extreme to another, he resolved to crush his

intense discomfort by rushing instantly into this new scheme for happiness.

No sooner had he come to the resolution, than dreading lest the incitement to it should evaporate, he hastened to carry out his purposes without the loss of a single hour. With a throbbing pulse and burning brow he left his room for the first time for three weeks; and forgetting the doctor's caution to use his foot as gently as possible, descended hastily to the drawing-room: ready in his impetuosity even to send for Helen should she not happen to be there.

It chanced that Helen, her mother, and Lady Selina were where he sought the first of them. They had just finished their five o'clock tea, and were sitting round the fire with their toes upon the fender, and gowns turned up to their knees, as ladies are wont to do when in the full enjoyment

of that peculiar intercourse which we others impertinently call gossip. There was a burst of surprise and a rapid adjustment of garments when the marquis disturbed the little party. Candles had not yet been brought; and as the curtains were drawn, the room was too obscure for any one to observe how ghastly and excited Lord Northern looked. Lady Selina proceeded at once to kiss her brother, and the other two ladies expressed their unfeigned delight to see him once more restored to their society. Lady Selina presently remarked that she thought her brother ought not to over exert himself, as relapses were not uncommon, and serious consequences often accrued after injuries like his. Helen said that he had not grown stouter during his confinement, and added that she felt much aggrieved that she was not allowed to nurse him in his illness. Mrs. Seabright

rebuked her daughter for a remark which seemed to her of dubious propriety.

“ Well, mama,” said Miss Helen, “ don’t nuns attend hospitals? I suppose they’re proper enough, ain’t they ? ”

“ Law, my love, how you talk ? ” says the elder lady. “ It’ll be time enough for you to nurse young men when you are married to one.”

These observations were not much to his lordship’s taste. But Mrs. Seabright was not the most refined of her sex ; nor were her remarks always guided by the nicest sense of tact.


“ Whatever you may say,” added the matron, apologetically for her daughter, “ I think the marquis is all the handsomer for his illness. It gives him quite an interesting air.”

After a few more reflections of this nature, Lady Selina, who was always on the look out to

advance the project she had at heart, conveyed a semaphoric intimation to Mrs. Seabright, which that lady was at no loss to understand. The marquis' sister was the first to leave. Mrs. Seabright soon followed the example, with a plea so lame, that even Northern smiled at the manoeuvre. Whether Helen saw through these tactics or not, she felt no nervousness at the situation. Both her mother and Lady Selina had practised the same stratagem so often before, and so often before nothing had come of it, that she would have felt quite at ease in a *tête-a-tête* with Lord Northern even had her perfect intimacy with her old playfellow not insured tranquillity.

The marquis however, as we know, was very far from enjoying a like placid state of temper. The assurance which he preeminently possessed, in the presence of women generally, seemed of a

sudden to desert him. The bantering condescension of an accustomed victor, which characterised his usual manner with women, gave place to the timidity of a blushing school-boy. He was in fact partly conscious, perhaps for the first time, that even Helen Seabright might be too good for him: that with all his own perfections, the manly and faithful devotion of Wharton might upon this crucial test prove the most attractive. When he was indifferent to Helen's love he had naturally never troubled his head about a rival. Now that he had staked his happiness upon this one throw, whatever threatened him with defeat—which would leave him in a more desperate plight than before—assumed the most formidable aspect. And of all obstacles Wharton had suddenly grown into the greatest. He felt the necessity of exploring before he brought his forces into action.



“You must have been fearfully bored,” said Helen, “shut up there by yourself, especially as I was not allowed to come and see you.” The opening was a good one; but it would have been premature as yet to take advantage of it.

“Not so bad as you suppose. It gave me plenty of opportunity for reflection. And you know I want a little of that sort of thing now and then.”

“A little? a good deal I should say.”

“You think me very foolish, do you Helen?”

“Oh, I don’t know; not worse than other people, I dare say.”

“Who do you mean by other people? Do you think I’m more foolish than St. Kitts, for instance?”

“I never thought of making the comparison before. Lord St. Kitts is such a jolly little fellow.



But you're much cleverer than him, you know. He couldn't lecture and make speeches, and all that sort of thing. He can ride though, first-rate; can't he? And he is A. I. at dancing."

"What do you say to Froth?"

"Bother Froth!" ejaculated the young lady, "I hate the sight of him. He is the most detestable creature I ever met."

"Terrier then?"

"Ha, ha! Poor Mr. Terrier! no I don't think you are more foolish than him."

"Evans?"

"Oh he's too clever by half. I never know whether he is laughing at me, or whether he is paying me a compliment."

"Well, who else is there? I've gone through the whole list of other people? Let me see! ah: by-the-by, Wharton—what do you think of him?"

Miss Seabright's pulse jumped from a steady seventy-five to a fluttering ninety. What did her companion mean by this question? There was a huskiness in his voice which her quick ear now first took heed of.

"Mr. Wharton? I don't know. I never bothered myself much about him."

"Indeed!" said Northern, who felt in for it now; "I always thought you had a great liking for him."

"Perhaps you thought wrong."

"Then you are not fond of Wharton?"

"Yes I am."

"More so than of any one else?"

"I never said that: I suppose one may like a person, without——"

"Being in love with him, eh?"

"Why are you so inquisitive?"

“Because it concerns me to know : concerns me deeply to know.”

“Really !” (pulse a hundred) “I don’t see how it *can* concern you.”

“Nelly,” (he takes her hand) “my happiness—the happiness of my life, depends on your love. We have been brought up as children together. We have—that is—you know how fond I have always been of you. You may have thought lately that I—that I did not show so much feeling as—as I really possessed. But you never can have doubted that I loved you. Yes, dearest ! loved you devotedly—passionately—as I do now. Nelly, darling, will you be my wife ?”

Miss Seabright (whose pulse is now quite uncountable) mutters the simple monosyllable “Yes.”

“Thank God ! Bless you, dearest. Bless you !

If you only knew what a load you have removed from my mind! We shall be so happy. I see a new life, new hopes, opening out before me. And you, Nelly? you do love me, don't you, dearest?"

"Yes," and the usual accompaniments follow. "But I did not expect it," says Miss Helen, smiling archly. "Do you know, I was afraid you were captivated with somebody else, Northern."

"Did you, dear? you won't think that any more, will you?"

"No, certainly not. We shall be so awfully jolly, shan't we?"

"We shall indeed."

"How astonished they will be, won't they?" says Miss Nell.

"We don't care what they think, dear. We are all in all to each other."

“Yes, but it does seem so funny. I do so long to tell papa; and poor dear mother will be wild with delight.”

“Everybody will be glad,” says his lordship, thinking with a shudder of Daisy de Crecy.

“Oh yes, everybody,” echoes Miss Seabright, with a sudden vision of the engineer. “But I shall never have the courage to announce it.” “Heavens!” thought the young lady, “what *will* Miss Mumford think of me! What an idiot I was, to write her that last letter.”

“Perhaps,” said Northern after a pause, during which each began to discount the ecstasy of their bliss, “perhaps it would be as well for the present if we did say nothing about it. It is such a bore having everybody buzzing about one with stupid congratulations. Don’t you think so yourself, Nelly?”

“Yes,” said she, “I quite agree with you.”  
“If,” were her thoughts, “I only have time to prepare Miss Mumford, and let her break it to poor Wharton, it won’t so much matter.” She then added aloud, “I will just tell papa and mama, and then we’ll keep it dark from every soul else.”

“Yes,” rejoins the marquis, “you *must* tell them I suppose ; though I am afraid your mother will never keep the secret.”

“I think she will, if I make her promise.”

After another pause, “Perhaps after all, dear Nelly,” Lord Northern said, “it will be safest not to mention it to *any* one just yet—not till we leave Tinselby, say. You won’t mind, dearest, withholding the news for two days more, will you ?”

“Not a bit, if you particularly wish it. Papa is the only one I should like just to whisper it to.’

“ We ll upon the whole I would rather not. No, I’d rather not. You’ll promise me then, darling, you will not mention it to anyone ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ So then, we’ll behave exactly the same as ever when others are present, eh ? ”

“ All right.”

“ So as not to let anyone have a suspicion of the truth.”

“ Very well.”

“ Dear Helen ! ’tis so nice of you giving in to my whim about this. But it will only be for a couple of days. And after that you can—we can do as we like about it.”

The betrothed pair parted with a tender embrace. When Helen was alone, the events of the last half hour seemed so strange to her that she could hardly tell whether she was happy or not.

Bewildering thoughts of becoming shortly a marchioness and eventually a duchess, of reigning supreme at Tramways, mistress of the castle, —*the* castle, carriages, horses, footmen, London mansions, dinners, balls, boxes at the opera, court, millinery, diamonds, etc., tour on the continent, cruise in the yacht, season at Paris, more millinery, more diamonds, more etc., all jostled one another in rapidest succession. Then, in the course of the foreign trip, Miss Helen happened to pass through the capital of a certain district in Rhenish Prussia: much to her discomfort, she there fell in with a certain English gentleman engaged in some engineering operations for the Prussian government. The scene which took place at this encounter (as the young lady pictured it to herself) was not calculated to leave an agreeable impression upon her memory. Bitter but dignified reproaches



on the part of the gentleman, consciousness of levity of conduct on her own, formed the principal features of this incident of travel. And not being absolutely without tenderness of heart and rectitude of principle, Miss Helen had great difficulty in dispelling these painful images by recurrence to the pleasurable ones we have above alluded to. In truth, the good and the evil of her situation were so nearly balanced that she could not as yet foresee which would ultimately prevail.

As to the noble marquis, it is easy enough to imagine what his feelings were. He had taken the plunge on purely hygienic principles. But there can be little doubt that he found the bath most desperately chilly; and, judging by that after thought of secrecy for which he was so confoundedly anxious, it is evident that he was no sooner in the scrape than he began to wish himself out again.

Lord Northern did not remain at Tinselby so long even as he had intended. Business of an urgent nature (so he informed Miss Seabright) compelled him to take the first train in the morning to London.

“I will write” (the communication was conveyed in a brief note, for the writer was off before breakfast and had no opportunity of meeting his *fiancée*); “I will write directly I get to town. Meanwhile let me repeat, *most earnestly*, the request I made last night, that you will *on no account* divulge our secret to any living soul until you have my authority for so doing. I am afraid, dear Helen, you will consider this injunction rather whimsical: but you must humour me now, for you know you will have it all your own way when we are married.”

Curiously enough, Miss Seabright was not vexed by the obligation imposed upon her.

It remains to be stated that as Lady de Crecy pleaded indisposition and did not appear at the dinner-table on the evening preceding the 'marquis' departure, she and Lord Northern did not meet again. She learnt from Mrs. Tucker the first thing next morning that he was gone. She was not altogether surprised at the intelligence. And though a deep sigh involuntarily escaped her, on the whole she experienced a sense of relief resembling that of a patient soon after a painful operation. Neither Lady de Crecy nor anyone in the house had the faintest surmise of what had transpired. Helen persevered in her reticence with the utmost fidelity. And, as we shall see in the sequel, some time had yet to elapse before this important secret was promulgated to the world at large.

END OF VOL. II.



